PATRONAGE BY PROXY

ART COMPETITIONS IN AUSTRALIA DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

VOLUME 1

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A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own original work

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VOLUME I

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the evolution of art competitions in Australia during the 20th century, and their implications for artists and for those who have sponsored them. During the century some 5,000 separate competitions were held. A number of these recurred over varying periods, while some were held only once. Many were occasions at which artists could sell their work.

Each competition is in effect a separate "organism", the components of which are the sponsor who began and supported it and provided the award, the artists whose entered their works in it, and the judges who were employed by the sponsor to choose the winner. All take part in the competition voluntarily. Although there are no overall controls which apply to art competitions, some generally accepted conventions have developed. Different categories of sponsors, including the artists themselves and the art galleries, have created different kinds of competitions, which have in turn attracted different audiences.

Competitions are discussed with reference to the various categories of sponsors, and in relation to three successive phases which reflect changing conditions and changing attitudes.

Judges are "experts" appointed by sponsors to adjudicate on the entries in each competition. Their decisions provide the focus of the competition, and they help to establish standards which contribute to the technical development of artists. A survey of judges shows that, although in many cases each one has adjudicated on only one occasion, a number of judges have served relatively frequently, and thus have acquired valuable experience which they have been able to share.

Art competitions have offered artists opportunities to take initiatives to gain recognition for their work outside the conventional art market, and possibly also outside their own locality. These opportunities may, however, involve special costs, and requirements for special types of work. Artists' patterns of entry in competitions vary greatly, and some aspects of these patterns are analysed in the thesis. It shows that, while some artists have entered and won competitions repeatedly and over long periods, many have been successful on only very few occasions. Although it cannot be proved, it seems certain that many entrants have never won. Artists who enter competitions and have their work exhibited, and especially winning artists, may in a sense temporarily become commodities owned by the sponsor.

The audiences at exhibitions associated with competitions have often been targetted by sponsors, and have been an important part of art competitions, and both competitions and exhibitions have helped to stimulate community interest in contemporary art and artists. They have also encouraged critical comment on works of art.

The conclusion reached is that competitions have provided artists with an additional exhibiting venue outside the general art market, and with the possibility of rewards. They have facilitated important public exposure, as well as exchange of ideas and experiences between artists, judges and audiences across the country.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My research was mainly based on information at a relatively detailed level about individuals, individual organisations and individual competitions. A variety of sources was therefore used.

The holdings of the major custodial institutions have been of fundamental importance. The collections of Australian books, manuscripts, newspapers, periodicals, and transcripts of interviews in the NLA have provided an invaluable central resource at a national level. These collections have been complemented by the specialised material in the library of the NGA, and in particular its assemblage of elusive data on art competitions, on artists and their careers, and on art institutions. The Chief Librarian, Margaret Shaw, and her staff have been unfailingly helpful in providing guidance. The specialised holdings of the Library of the AGNSW have also been invaluable, especially in two of its special strengths, the Minutes of Meetings of the Trustees of the AGNSW, and collected material on art competitions and societies. The James Hardie Library in the State Library of Queensland had considerable material on art competitions, and the Library of the NGV had a useful collection of ephemera. The Latrobe Library in Melbourne contained some valuable archival material.

Some public art galleries, notably the Geelong Art Gallery, the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, the Bendigo Art Gallery, the Shepparton Arts Centre, the Grafton Art Gallery and the Gold Coast City Art Gallery were particularly helpful in allowing me access to their records. Other organisations which freely allowed me to use their records included the Print Council of Australia, the Albury City Council, the Victorian Artists' Society, the Rockdale Council, Mobil Oil Pty. Ltd., and the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW. The Blake Society generously allowed me to examine all of its records in detail.

Responses to the Survey of Art Competitions, which I held in 1997, were received from some eighty sponsors, a list of whom is attached. I have not previously acknowledged their contributions individually. I am most grateful for the information and comment which they supplied.

I am grateful also to a number of people to whom I spoke, in many cases by telephone, and who were willing to discuss or to supply information about the art competitions with which they had been associated, or competitions

in general. Franco Belgiorno Nettis, for example, founder of the Transfield *Prize*, discussed it with me, and showed me the collection of works which he had acquired as sponsor. Some, but by no means all of these interviewees, are listed in the Bibliography. A number of people were generous in supplying me with copies of documentation about a variety of competitions in different locations. They included Maudie Palmer in relation to the *Moët & Chandon* award, and Maria Prendergast for *Contempora5*. Nick Hore was a most helpful contact with NAVA. I was delighted to be invited to the opening of the exhibition for the fiftieth *Albury Art Prize* in August 1998, and later attended some other openings. These occasions, which are the public climax of the competition concerned, reflect both artistic and community interest.

Within the Australian National University, Margaret Brown, who was Secretary of the Art History Department during most of my time on this project, has been a constant source of encouragement.

My profound appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr Sasha Grishin, Reader in Art History. His deep knowledge of art and artists in Australia has been invaluable in helping me to explore my topic. Even more important have been his willingness to provide practical advice and help, his patience, and his special ability to develop the confidence and to sustain the enthusiasm of the researcher.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE SELECTIVE SURVEY OF ART COMPETITIONS, 1997

RESPONSES RECEIVED

Respondents have been grouped in the following categories:

1 Societies of artists
2 Public art galleries
3 Local government authorities
4 Commercial undertakings
5 Individuals
6 Other groups in the community

The name of the current award has been shown for each, and locations have been indicated when these are not apparent from the title.

1 SOCIETIES OF ARTISTS

The Alice Springs Art Foundation Inc. (*The Alice Prize*).
Beaumaris Art Group Inc., Melbourne. (various awards)
Castle Hill Art Society (*Orange Blossom Festival Annual Art Award*).
City of Parramatta Art Society, Inc., NSW. (*Parramatta Foundation Art Award*).
City of Ryde Art Society, Sydney. (*Art Exhibition*).
Community Printmakers of Murwillumbah, NSW. (*Community Printmakers of Murwillumbah Acquisition Awards*).
Echuca Art Group, Victoria. (*Rich River Festival Exhibition*).
Lake Cargellico Arts & Crafts Society Inc., NSW. (*"Blue Waters" Arts & Crafts Exhibition*).
Maryborough Art Society. (*Maryborough Art Festival*).
Printmakers Association of Western Australia, Perth. (*Combined Open/ Experimental Award Exhibition, Perth*).
Royal Queensland Art Society and Central Queensland Contemporary Artists. (*Rockhampton Art Competition and Exhibition*)..
South Perth Society of Art & Craft Heritage Exhibition.
Townsville Art Society Inc. *(Townsville/Thuringowa Art Awards*).
Tumut Art Society. (*Tumut Art & Craft Exhibition).*
Victorian Artists Society, Melbourne. (*Norma Bull Art Scholarship*).

2 PUBLIC ART GALLERIES

AGNSW. (*The Dobell Prize for Drawing*).
AGSA. (*Melrose Prize*).
AGWA. (*Perth Prize for Drawing*).
Albury Regional Art Centre. (*Albury Art Prize*).
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery. (*Bathurst Art Purchase*).
.Bega Valley Regional Gallery, Bega. (*John Balmain National Portrait Awards*)
Broken Hill City Art Gallery. (*Outback Art Prize*).
Bunbury Regional Art Gallery. (*Bunbury Biennale*).
Burnie Regional Gallery. (*7 NT Tasmanian Art Exhibition*).
City of Ballarat Fine Art Gallery. (*Crouch Prizes*).
Geelong Art Gallery. (*Geelong Contemporary Art Prize*).
Gold Coast City Art Gallery. (*Gold Coast City Conrad Jupiters Art Prize*).
Goulburn Regional Art Gallery. (*Lilac Time Festival Art Prize/ Exhibition*).
Grafton Regional Gallery. (*Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award*).
Griffith Regional Art Gallery. (*National Contemporary Jewellery Award*).
Horsham Regional Art Gallery. (*Young Photographers Prize*).
MAGNT. (*National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award*).
Mildura Arts Centre. (*Mildura Sculpture Triennial*)
Northam Art Centre. (*Northam Art Prize*).
Tweed River Regional Art Gallery, Murwillumbah. (*Tweed Valley Art Prize*).
Warrnambool Art Gallery. (*Rena Ellen Jones Memorial Print Award*).

3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

Central Highlands Council, Tasmania. (*Central Highlands Council Annual Acquisitive Art Prize*).
Circular Head Council, Tasmania. (*Circular Head Arts Festival*).
City of Bayswater, WA. (*City of Bayswater Art Acquisition and Award Exhibition*).
City of Wanneroo, WA. (*City of Wanneroo Art Award*).
Clarence City Council, Tasmania. (*Clarence City Acquisitive Exhibition*).
Cootamundra Shire Council and Cootamundra Soroptomist Club, NSW. (*Cootamundra Shire Council Acquisitive Art Prize*).
Gosford City Council, NSW. (*"The Grandma Moses" Art Competition*).
Pine Rivers Shire Council, NSW. (*Pine Rivers Art Awards*).
Shire of Derby, West Kimberley, WA. (*Kimberley Art Prize*).

4 COMMERCIAL UNDERTAKINGS

Adelaide Advertiser. (*Advertiser Open Air Art Exhibition*).
Barossa Valley Vintage Festival. (*Barossa Valley Vintage Festival Art Competition*)
Canson Australia, Melbourne. (*Canson Student Print Award*).
Deacons Graham and James and Arts Victoria. (Deacons Graham & *James Arts 21 Award*).
Duroloid Pty. Ltd., Melbourne. (*The Silk Cut Acquisitive Award for Linocut Prints*).
Linden - Arts Centre & Gallery, Melbourne.
.North Midlands Agricultural Society, WA. (*North Midlands Agricultural Society's Art Competition*).
Perth Royal Show. (*Bank West Open Art Exhibition*).
Water Corporation, Perth South Region. (*Water Corporation Art Award*).

5 INDIVIDUALS

Art management, Sydney. (P*ortia Geach Memorial Award*)
Caulfield Arts Complex, Melbourne. (*Alice Bale Art Award*)
Brian Lambert and Katherine Town Council, Northern Territory. (*Brian Lambert Art Acquisition Award*)
Doug Moran National Portrait Prize Ltd., Sydney. (*The Doug Moran National Portrait Prize*).
Peter Burns, Kangaroo Ground, Victoria. (*Kangaroo Award for Sculpture*)

6 OTHER GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY

Albany Community Arts Program, WA. (*Albany Art Prize*).
Anglican Church Grammar School, Brisbane (*Churchie Exhibition of Emerging Art*).
Bundaberg Rotary Club, Bundaberg TAFE College and Bundaberg Art Society. (*Bundaberg Arts Festival*)
Centrehouse Inc. Community Arts Centre, Sydney. (*Lloyd Rees Memorial Youth Art Award*)
Cossack Historic Town, WA. (*Cossack Acquisitive Art Awards*)
Currabubula Red Cross, NSW. (*Currabubula Red Cross Art Exhibition*).
Downlands Parents & Friends Association, Toowoomba. (*Downlands College Art Exhibition*).
The Great Synagogue, Sydney. (*Great Synagogue Art Exhibition*).
Korumburra Rotary Club, Victoria. (*Korumburra Rotary Art Show*).
Leonora Art Prize Inc., WA. (*Leonora Art Prize*).
Loyola College, Watsonia, Victoria. (*Loyola College Annual Art and Fine Craft Exhibition*).
Law Society of NSW. (*Mahlab Law Week Art Prize*).
Melbourne Savage Club. (*Melbourne Savage Club Drawing Prize*).
Port Macquarie Lions Club, NSW. (*Macquarie Award 2000*).
Quota International of Wagga Wagga. (*Quota/Rotary of Wagga Wagga Art Competition*).
Rotary Club of Camberwell, Melbourne. (*Rotary Club of Camberwell Art Show & Competition*).
Rotary Club of Mornington Inc., Victoria. (*Mornington Rotary Club Art Prize*).
Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club, Newport, NSW. (*Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club Art Award*)
St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, Organising Committee of the Sesqui-Centenary. (*St Mary's Cathedral Religious Art Prize*).
University of Queensland. (*Darnell de Gruchy Art Prize*).

ABBREVIATIONS USED

Notes:
1 Current titles are used for art galleries throughout.

2 NSW is used for New South Wales throughout

ART INSTITUTIONS

AGNSW	Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
AGSA	Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.
AGWA	Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth.
MAGNT	Museum and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, Darwin.
MCA	Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.
MMAH	Museum of Modern Art at Heide.
MPAC	Mornington Peninsula Arts Centre, Mornington, Victoria.
NGA	National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.
NGV	National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
NLA	National Library of Australia, Canberra.
QAG	Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.
QVMAG	Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston.
TMAG	Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart.

SOCIETIES

Blake Society	Blake Society for Religious Art.
CAS	Contemporary Art Society.
NAVA	National Association for the Visual Arts.
RAS	Royal Art Society of New South Wales.
RQAS	Royal Queensland Art Society.
RSASA	Royal South Australian Society of Arts.
SA, NSW	Society of Artists, NSW.
VAS	Victorian Artists' Society.

PUBLICATIONS AND RECORDS

A and A *Art and Australia,* Ure Smith, Sydney.

AGNSW TM Minutes of Meetings of the Trustees of the AGNSW.

Blake Catalogue Catalogue of the Blake Prize Exhibition.

Blake Minutes Minutes of Meetings of the Blake Society.

McCulloch, 1994 McCulloch, Alan, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Art,* revised and updated by Susan McCulloch. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1994.

SMH Sydney Morning Herald.

INTRODUCTION

Definition of Art Competitions

An art competition is a formal contest among artists organised by a sponsor. It offers an award. Artists may enter the contest, voluntarily or by invitation, by submitting works which they have created, and these works are assessed in order to select the winner or winners of the award. More than one thousand art competitions were initiated in Australia during the 20th century, and they have become virtually a sub-culture of the visual arts, affecting artists, art institutions and viewers. The range of these competitions is extremely diverse, and each one, even if it is a single episode in a recurring series, is a separate entity. Its character is affected by the intentions of its sponsors, its location, the time when it is held, its judges, the award which it offers, the conditions which apply to it, and the number and quality of its entries. It can be an emotive event, capable of generating speculation, suspense, enthusiasm, criticism, controversy, respect and disdain.

Art competitions have evolved their own conventions and procedures. There is usually an organisational structure which consists of the initiator, who invents the idea for the competition, a sponsor, who supports it financially and may also organise it, (and who may in fact have initiated it), the artists who compete, and the judge or judges who assess the entries and select the winner. In most cases any artists are free to enter, and to choose the subject and style of the works they submit. It is generally understood that the judges function independently of the sponsors, who accept their decisions. An exhibition of all or a selection of the works submitted is an important tangible outcome of the competition, and in most cases these works are available for sale to the public.

There are two critical elements in this operating structure which cannot be fully controlled by the sponsor. One is the audience, which may be present at the social function where the results are announced and at the exhibition of the art objects which were entered, or which may become aware of the competition indirectly through reports and comments on it. This audience is likely to have been targetted in advance by the sponsor, one of whose main reasons for holding the competition is likely to be to attract the attention of the community to this act of patronage.

The other critical element is the artists. It is ironic that their participation is voluntary, because the success of the competition is completely dependent on them. Obviously, the art objects which they enter form the substance of the competition. More subtly, it is the respect of the community for artists as creative individuals with special abilities, and its interest in their work, which provides the rationale for the whole competition process, and which establishes its status. This concept is embodied in the 1980 UNESCO definition of an artist:

> *Any person who creates or gives creative expression to or recreates works of art, who considers his [sic] artistic creation to be an essential part of his life, who contributes in his way to the development of art and culture and who is or asks to be recognised as an artist, whether or not he [sic] is bound by any relations of employment or association.*[1]

There has probably always been some kind of competition between artists, as there is between fellow workers in any discipline.[2] This competition has, however, become increasingly formalised over time. At the same time, the status of artists has been established, often through their own efforts as well as those of their patrons. Three successive events, two of which occurred in Italy and one in Britain, provide historical perspectives on these developments.

The first occurred in Italy. Many medieval artists were anonymous members of the staff of a workshop, although some were well known. From at least the 12th century, sculptors in Italy had traditionally incorporated in their work epigraphs which drew attention to its excellence and to its creator, and which implied a kind of rivalry. Epigraphs by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano, two generations of sculptors within one family, demonstrate changing attitudes to artistic recognition. The inscription by Nicola Pisano, for example, on his pulpit in the Baptistery at Pisa, simply made the comment "...his very skilful hand may worthily be praised".[3] Giovanni, his son, was more assertive. The pulpit in Sant' Andrea at Pistoia was one of his major and highly innovative works of sculpture. In the inscription which he placed on it in 1301, he claimed to be "... the son of Nicola and blessed with higher skill... endowed with greater mastery than any seen before".[4] As Kosegarten points out, he was so convinced of his own artistic and moral superiority over other artists that he claimed to have a special and divinely conferred artistic gift.[5]

The second event occurred in 15th century Florence when a patron, the wealthy *Calimala* Guild, held a competition to encourage artists to create designs for new bronze doors for the Baptistery, a prestigious project for one of the most important buildings in the city.[6] It was the general practice of public authorities to hold open competitions, especially for architectural projects, and to award commissions on the results of these. The competition for the Baptistery doors was unusual because it was for sculpture rather than architecture. It attracted a number of designs, and the commission was awarded to a young and virtually unknown artist, Lorenzo Ghiberti, because of the artistic and technical skill of his entry and its fashionable style.

This competition produced some special benefits for the patrons. It was a successful device for canvassing a wide range of ideas and skills for an unusual project, and as a result, the authorities accepted the challenge of adopting an unexpectedly innovative concept for a work of major importance. It provided actual examples of the workmanship of the contestants, which made it possible for the patrons to specify the nature of some artistic features of the commission which were regarded as most important by the patron, in a way which was unprecedented for projects of this kind.[7] It also provided a unique opportunity for an emerging artist to demonstrate his ideas and abilities. In addition, the fact of competition had become a matter of public interest, so that it helped to establish the special image of the artist as a creative individual, and it also provided good publicity for the patrons.

The third occasion was the creation of the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1769. It was established through the initiatives of artists, with the aim of "promoting the Arts of Design", and it was unmistakably a professional body, which had strict standards for membership, and conducted Schools for selected students.[8] Because it was under royal patronage, it had an authoritative, if elitist, position in a climate of changing attitudes to art and artists, and to the marketing of their work. Its annual Summer Exhibitions of the work of members had special prestige because they were visited by the Royal family, and they became an important feature of the annual London social season.[9] The elitism of the Academy was complemented by the formation of a number of other artists' societies with more liberal conditions of entry, many of them specialising in particular forms of art. Together, and with the later addition of commercial galleries, they created a climate of respect for artists, and a lasting fashion for visits to exhibitions.[10] As Hemingway has pointed out, an exhibition presented two aspects for audiences - the subject and technique of the individual paintings it

contained, and the exhibition itself as a symbol of the existing social and political order.[11] These reasons for visiting art exhibitions were translated to Australia during the colonial period through the establishment of artists' societies and public art galleries.

Artists' societies in London and the provinces did not foster overt competition between artists, but a form of competition was inevitable at the Summer Exhibitions of the Royal Academy because of large numbers of entries and limited hanging space. "Pictures of the Year" appeared at these exhibitions, but were not officially selected. They seem to have been the paintings in front of which the crowds congregated most thickly - unofficial forerunners of the Australian concept of a "People's Choice".[12]

It seems likely that the Art Unions which were popular in Britain in the 19th century had some indirect influence in associating the idea of competition with art, although in fact in Art Unions the competition was between the subscribers rather than between artists. Art was involved to the extent that the successful subscribers were required to spend their winnings on contemporary works of art which they chose from current exhibitions.[13]

Intention of the Thesis

This thesis examines the evolution of art competitions as part of the art environment in Australia during the 20th century, with the aim of showing how these competitions have provided a significant kind of patronage for artists. It is an indirect form of patronage, because it is dependent on formal competition as exercised through the co-operative relationship of sponsors and judges which was mentioned earlier, and because in the great majority of cases it is the artists who choose to take part, rather than the patrons who invite them to do so. It offers artists a variety of opportunities which are outside the regular art market for recognition of their work, and at the same time it has the effect of attracting new audiences.

My intention has been to establish the nature of the art competitions held during this period, and to determine by whom and for what reasons they were held, and how they were organised. On this basis, I have considered the opportunities which they offered and the outcomes which they created for art and artists. These outcomes have included the effects of competitions in developing public perceptions of the special status of the artist and the art object, and in establishing the professionalism of artists.

They have also included recognition of the social role of art competitions within the community.

This study is based on a large body of empirical research. It is essentially a survey of different aspects of art competitions, and I have attempted to identify most of the competitions which have been held throughout Australia during the century. In order to achieve a practical overview, I have considered them in relation to the chief active participants - the sponsors, the artists and the judges.

There have been several distinct categories of sponsors, including artists, art galleries, commercial organisations and other groups in the community, each with a different purpose, and each aiming at a different audience. I have reviewed selected competitions with the aim of assessing the motivations of the sponsors concerned, and also the ways in which they may at times have attempted to influence the nature of the work entered in the competitions which they have sponsored. Competitions have been grouped in relation to three successive phases for purposes of comparison, and to assist in tracing variations in the course of recurring competitions, and also as a way of making the review more manageable. My aim was to choose representative competitions, but those chosen had also to be competitions about which useful information was available. Case studies were prepared for three competitions which had some special significance, and these are presented as appendices.

The judging is a critical factor in art competitions, because the judges are regarded as experts whose decisions are authoritative and influential. They may also be controversial. My intention has been to trace the kinds of judging expertise which were employed by sponsors, and also to form some idea of the attitudes of judges to adjudication in the competition situation. This was done principally by reviewing the numbers of judges who were employed in a variety of competitions, the composition of judging panels, the careers of the judges who were most often employed, and some comments made by the judges. An index to judges which I compiled formed the basis for this review. It was used to identify the categories of people who had been chosen to officiate, and as a basis for examining the qualifications and experience of a representative number of them.

Artists are the central element of art competitions. Competitions have been particularly valuable to them because they relate to their current work. In general comments related to the overall review of art competitions which

was mentioned earlier, I have attempted to assess the professional and practical implications of these competitions for artists, not only in helping to establish their professional status, but also by encouraging some specialisations in their work. It is worth noting that many competitions were staged by sponsors who had no direct association with art and artists, so that the fact that they chose to allocate resources to sponsorship was in itself clear evidence that they recognised that art and artists had a special status in the community.

As a way of assembling more specific information about the participation in competitions by artists, I compiled an index to the artists who have won competitions, as a basis for a review of their careers and their motivations for entering. While it would be interesting to know of the artists who entered but did not succeed, to trace them comprehensively would have been impractical. It would be interesting also to know of the artists who, perhaps on principle, did not enter competitions, but either anecdotal information or informed guesswork would have been needed to trace them, and the results would have remained largely speculative. The nature of the available sources of data means that none of the indexes mentioned above can claim to be comprehensive, but it seems reasonable to claim that they are representative. I also made some brief case studies of selected artists, discussing the extent to which they were successful in competitions in the context of their careers in general.

One aspect of the social role of art competitions was the comment and criticism which appeared in journals, newspapers and electronic media, and which over time became increasingly sophisticated, and at times cynical. Another aspect to be considered is the various audiences to whom the competition exhibitions were directed, and their role in encouraging popular interest in art and particularly in local artists.

Part of my research into individual competitions took the form of a sampling survey which I carried out with the intention of gleaning information which is not available from other sources, on aspects such as the motivations of the sponsors of competitions, arrangements for judging, and the reactions of artists and the public to particular competitions. Some 185 questionnaires were sent out, and ninety replies were received. The response rate was not even between the different categories, so that it did not produce representative totals. For example, commercial sponsors were not nearly as forthcoming as community groups, galleries and local government authorities, and it was often not possible for them to provide

historical information. The Survey did, however, provide some factual information and practical comment, and it also communicated a genuine feeling of enthusiasm, particularly from the various community groups which had held competitions intended mainly for local artists.

From these sources I have attempted to assess the contributions which art competitions have made to the art scene in Australia.

Primary Sources Used

Because art competitions are organised individually and independently, there are no central bodies which co-ordinate, much less control them, and which might be expected to keep comprehensive records. Primary sources therefore tend to be at the level of individual competitions, and to have been created by sponsors in the course of running the competition.

Records of some public art galleries and municipal authorities which have acted as sponsors of competitions have been useful. The Minutes of Meetings of the Trustees of the AGNSW are particularly valuable because of the long, and at times tortuous, involvement of the Trustees with the *Archibald, Wynne* and *Sulman Prizes,* and several other awards. Others whose records were used were the Queensland Art Gallery, whose records provided some useful background information on local competitions, the Geelong Art Gallery Association, the Grafton Art Gallery, the Shepparton Art Gallery and the Rockdale Council.

The records of the Blake Society were illuminating, as were those of the Print Council of Australia, the NSW Society of Artists and the Victorian Artists' Society.

The records of individual competitions, such as prospectuses and catalogues, represent the competition at its operational level. Those which I used were in some cases held by or obtained from the sponsors, but I was able to access collections of them in the libraries of the NGA and the AGNSW, the State Library of Victoria, and the James Hardie Library in the State Library of Queensland.

The transcripts of interviews with artists held by the National Library (and particularly those conducted by Hazel de Berg and Barbara Blackman) were useful, even if largely by default, because only a few of the interviewees volunteered references to their performance in competitions.

I was able to interview some sponsors, gallery staff, judges and artists, in most cases informally. An historic interview was with Allan Gamble who, as a Mosman Councillor, set up the first *Mosman Prize* in 1947, and steered it through various complications to the point where it became an institution of the Mosman Council, and justified the provision of a gallery. He was also a member of the Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO which in the 1950s produced *Suggested Conditions offered as a guide to organisers of competitive art exhibitions*, the only Australian attempt to specify generally applicable conditions of which I am aware. [14]

I attended the opening functions of several competitions where awards were announced, and in each case was impressed by the importance to winners of the recognition of their work which the award brought. The reactions of the much greater number of non-winners were not so obvious. Openings also demonstrated the attraction which a blend of art and competition has for viewers, particularly if presented as a social occasion.

Secondary sources used

The daily press has been an important source. Since the nineteenth century, it has consistently reported on art matters such as exhibitions and competitions. Reports have become increasingly informed and critical. Literary journals such as *Meanjin*, and others concerned with public opinion, such as the *Bulletin*, have also been attentive to the arts. Journals such as *Art and Australia*, and its predecessor, *Art in Australia*, have presented a more specialised, if less robustly critical, approach. Other specialist publications, such as *Art Monthly Australia*, *Artlink*, and *Australian Artist*, which proliferated in the 1980s, were directed at differing art communities and presented correspondingly different viewpoints.

The lists of competitions and prizes which were published annually by the AGNSW from 1965 to 1983-84 did not claim to be comprehensive, but they are a valuable and continuous source of information on competitions and their sponsors and conditions. These lists were succeeded in 1991 by *Money for Visual Artists, a guide to awards, prizes and professional development opportunities for visual artists and craftspeople*, successive editions of which was published by NAVA, and which contains more detailed information. Three editions have now appeared. An invaluable and extremely comprehensive source is *The Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, edited by Alan

McCulloch, and first published in 1964. The latest edition, published in 1994, was revised and updated by Susan McCulloch. Each edition has contained entries for significant competitions, and in later editions these have formed a separate section. The entries for individual artists include listings of the main awards which they have received.

Other secondary sources which were used included the newsletters of artists' societies, particularly the Broadsheets of the various state branches of the CAS, which contain some lively comment, and *Imprint* published by the Print Council of Australia, which fosters the cause of original printmaking.

I have consulted two thesis relating to the *Blake Prize*. One, by Rosemary Crumlin, an investigation of some aspects of the history of the *Blake Prize* for *Religious Art* was submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Visual Arts, Monash University in 1983, and covered the first twenty-five years of the Blake Prize. The other, by R. B. Pattenden, *The Blake Prize for Religious Art, 1951 to 1962*, at the Department of Fine Art, Sydney University in 1984, was particularly concerned with theological perspectives and the attitudes of the Churches. Other relevant theses were an Honours thesis for the Department of Art History in the University of Queensland in 1987, by Lynne Seeat, *Strategy for a collection: the Gold Coast Art Prize 1968-1985*, which was most informative about the politics behind the development of this prize, and Rowen Johnson's Postgraduate Thesis for the Department of Fine Arts, University of Melbourne, in 1990, *A Brief History of the Geelong Art Gallery 1896 -1990.*

Except for a few short articles, there is virtually no published material about competitions in general. There are, however, some histories of individual competitions. Not surprisingly, the *Archibald* and *Blake* prizes have attracted most attention. There are some brief histories of both. *Let's face it*, by Peter Ross, which was published in 1999, provides a profusely illustrated account of all the winners, and Rosemary Crumlin makes substantial references to the *Blake Prize* in her *Images of Religion*. There are a few others - for example, Curran's *Sun, Sea and Shadows*, a history of the fifty years of the *Redcliffe Art Contest* in Queensland, and Allan Gamble's account of the *Mosman Art Prize*, of which I saw a manuscript copy. Some biographies of artists mention the competitions with which they have been involved, but they do not generally feature prominently.

Publications arising from the various studies commissioned by the Australia Council and some other similar studies are an authoritative source of information on the financial situation of artists in general, including those working in the visual arts, and on the viewpoints of potential sponsors. Annual reports of commercial enterprises which sponsored competitions have, on the whole, been uninformative about their reasons for undertaking sponsorship and their evaluation of its success.

ENDNOTES

1 David Throsby and Beverley Thompson, 'Definition of an artist' in *But what do you do for a living?* Australia Council, Sydney, 1994, p. 6.

2 In classical antiquity artists had the inferior status of manual workers and were not eligible for the kind of fame enjoyed by actors and athletes. See 'Concepts of the Nature of Craftsmanship', in Alison Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1972, pp. 124, 94. Mimesis was the goal of painting, and anecdotes of rivalry between artists are concerned, for example, with ability to paint grapes realistically enough to attract the birds. See 'The Story of Parhasios and Zeuxis', in Jerome J. Pollitt, *The Art of Ancient Greece*, Cambridge U.P., 1990, p. 150. Pliny, however, wrote of a competition for which five sculptors had each made a statue of an Amazon for the temple of Artemis at Ephesus. It was judged by the sculptors themselves, and Polykleitos won on second preferences, each sculptor having given first preference to his own work. See 'Greek Sculpture' in Gisela Richter, *The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks*, Yale U.P. New Haven 1946, p. 227.

3 Antje M. Kosegarten, 'The Origins of Artistic Competition in Italy', *Istituto* Nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento, *Lorenzo Ghiberti nel suo Tempo, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Firenze, 18-21 Ottobre 1978.* Leo S. Olschki, Editore, Firenze, MCMLXXX, p. 172.

4 John White, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1250-1400*, Yale U.P., 1993, p. 122.

5 After studying forms of competition between artists in Italy, Kosegarten came to the conclusion that Giovanni genuinely believed that his work proved that he was the foremost among contemporary sculptors, and that his subsequent bitter rivalry with other sculptors was based on this belief (Kosegarten op. cit., p 176). It is significant that Henry Moore, when comparing the work of the two sculptors, echoed Giovanni's opinion. In his view, Giovanni was the innovator in using the body to express a deep philosophical understanding of human nature. Henry Moore, 'Introduction', in Michael Ayrton, *Giovanni Pisano, Sculptor*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1969, p. 8.

6 Florence was then a thriving commercial city, the fifth largest in Italy, and constantly under threat from rival cities. The richness of its buildings was an important demonstration of its power. The governing *Signoria* drew its members from the guilds, each of which had responsibilities for major buildings, as well as for providing charitable services. The prestige of the guilds was enhanced in two ways by the richness of their buildings - it was evidence of their affluence and generosity within the community, and it was an important contribution to the prestige of the city.

7 Kosegarten points out that the fact that Ghiberti himself was required to execute some parts of the work such as hair and nudes, showed that the commissioning authorities had a strong concern for its artistic perfection. (Kosegarten op. cit., p. 183).

8 Sidney C. Hutchison, *The History of the Royal Academy 1768-1986*, Robert Royce, London, 1986, pp. 24,25.

9 There was no formal competition, but a special Hanging Committee of members selected works to be hung, and allocated them to a particular category of wall space. The prestige of visits by members of the Royal family to the exhibitions was tempered by outrage at the immorality of their being allowed to do so on Sundays. (Bernard Denvir, *The Early Nineteenth Century*, Longman, London, 1984, p. 78).

10 An early specialist society was the Water Colour Society, founded in 1804. Several others, such as the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and the Royal Society of Portrait Painters were also awarded Royal Charters. These societies also held exhibitions, which in some cases provided opportunities for clients to meet artists, and to accept them as professionals. See L. F. Codell, 'Artists' Professional Societies, Production, Consumption and Aesthetics', in Bernard Allen (ed.), *Towards a Modern Art World*. Paul Mellon Centre, Yale, 1955, p. 176.

11 A. Hemingway, 'Art Exhibitions as leisure-class rituals in early Nineteenth Century London', in Allen, op. cit, p. 105.

12 Hutchison, op. cit, p. 158.

13 Art Unions had many subscribers in Britain and the Empire, including Australia, in the 1830s and 1840s. By 1844, membership had reached about 15,000, and over £9,000 in prizes was distributed in 1846. See Geoffrey A. Godden, 'The Victorian Art Union Movement', *Apollo*, Vol. LXXV, Sep. 1961, p. 68.

14 Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, *Circular: Suggested conditions offered as a Guide to Organisers of Competitive Art Exhibitions*, the Committee, Sydney, nd. [c 1956].

CHAPTER 1

THE EVOLUTION OF ART COMPETITIONS IN AUSTRALIA

"The National Gallery [of Victoria] was the primer out of which a great proportion of Victorians were first instructed into the mysteries of the artistic alphabet... public taste has aided Victorian art in its struggle to emancipate itself from primordial darkness...

Artists have entered into competition with brother artists and by exhibiting their works have challenged criticism. This in itself is an advantage as it stimulates emulation and calls attention to the beauties and defects of the works of each individual painter." [1]

"Whether we like it or not, the creation, distribution and consumption of works of art is, and has always been as much of an economic process as an aesthetic one." [2]

Art competitions have come to be accepted as a form of patronage of the arts, although certainly an indirect one. They acquire a kind of authority because they are events which are open to the public, and because the fact that they are concerned with judgement implies a basis of expertise. At the same time, they retain their individuality because each is a separate event, usually with different participants. This unique blend of characteristics has made them versatile enough to be able to respond to the requirements of a variety of sponsors and situations, and at the same time to evolve, as they have done continuously in Australia during the 20th century. The competitions of the 20th century have in turn evolved from the 19th century, which provided the institutions on which they were to be based, directly or indirectly, and which reflect the pattern of art institutions in Britain. I will briefly review the competitions held during these periods to provide a context for more detailed consideration of developments in the 20th century.

In Australia, as in Britain, the two main types of art institutions were the societies which consisted of the artists themselves and other art lovers, and the government funded public art galleries. Both were patronised by those members of the community who regarded themselves as cultured, and both incidentally made some use of competition between artists. Colonial artists had begun to form societies from the 1840s onwards. There was, of course, no one central society which could aspire to be a counterpart of the Royal Academy, but societies were formed in each of the colonies with intentions which were similar to those of the artists' societies in Britain. They varied in degrees of professionalism and in the kind of patronage which they attracted, and they often had relatively short lifespans. Their most important functions were to provide mutual support for artists, and to

show members of the community that there were in the colony a number of creative artists whose work could be of interest to them. The Sydney Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Australia, for example, which was established in 1847, held exhibitions of works by its members and others. The object of the Victorian Society of Fine Arts was to advance the cause of the Fine Arts in Australasia, by means which included regular exhibitions.[3] Both Societies were short lived, but they had a number of successors. Exhibitions were presented as social occasions, and they increasingly provided opportunities for making sales in a market where there were no permanent dealers, where auctions were often unsuccessful, and where the prevailing cultural cringe was likely to bring good prices for poor quality imported European paintings and meagre sales for Australian paintings.[4]

The artists introduced competition to a few of these exhibitions, perhaps as an incentive for their colleagues, and almost certainly to provide an additional interest for viewers. Use of competition in this way seems to have been an Australian innovation. In South Australia in 1862 the Society of Art itself offered prizes for the best paintings in several categories, and it also offered some sixteen prizes contributed by patrons.[5] The NSW Academy of Art awarded gold and silver medals and certificates to some exhibitors at its exhibitions from 1872 to 1877, differentiating between artists and amateurs,[6] and the Tasmanian Art Society held competitive exhibitions in 1899. [7] A few painters, suffering from lack of patronage, resorted to the device of personal art unions.8

The first publicly funded art gallery was the NGV, which was established in 1861. By 1895 art galleries with a similarly educational purpose had been established in the capital cities of all the colonies, and in Launceston and the Victorian towns of Bendigo, Geelong, Ballarat and Warrnambool. The presence of a gallery demonstrated that a town had reached a stage in its development where it was concerned with culture. It was also an unmistakable indication that art was regarded as a desirable commodity, which justified capital expenditure for buildings.

It is clear, however, from the record of the galleries in the two largest colonies, that the existence of public art galleries did not necessarily encourage interest in the works of Australian artists. The collection of

the NGV consisted mainly of copies and original paintings which had been purchased by advisers in London. A Commission on Fine Arts, which was appointed in 1863 to develop a purchasing policy, concentrated on imports from overseas, although as a concession it agreed that £200 would be spent on work by Australian artists. One work was grudgingly bought at a competitive exhibition in 1864,[9] and a few others later, but by early 1891, although almost £43,000 had been spent in purchasing 104 oil paintings from overseas, a total of only £650 had been spent on paintings by colonial artists.[10]

The AGNSW seems to have had a similar attitude to the work of local artists. Admittedly, the Trustees accepted an offer by J. R. Fairfax to donate £50 for a purchase from the exhibition of the Art Society, providing that a worthy work could be selected, and they in fact made this purchase. They themselves set aside £200 for purchases of colonial works, but later decided not to spend it, and they do not seem to have reacted promptly to a letter of complaint from the Art Society in 1885 which expressed the view that the best specimens of colonial painting should form the nucleus of a truly National Gallery.[11] After a meeting between their representatives and a sub-committee of the Society, however, they noted that they wished to foster Colonial Art, and hoped, when the building was completed, to set aside a room for works by Colonial artists, and to make some purchases.[12] In 1897 they did in fact offer a competition for watercolour drawings of NSW scenery, and bought eight of the entries. They also organised a sponsored exhibition of works by Australian artists in London.[13]

The art competitions which have been mentioned were innovative in using the device of competition, but their rationale was clear because they were held by organisations which were concerned with art. A significant extension of this innovation was the staging of art competitions by some organisations which had no clear links with art. Spectacular examples were the grand intercolonial and international exhibitions held during the second half of the century. Their philosophy was stated by the Commissioner in his speech at the opening of the Centennial International Exhibition in Melbourne in 1888, as being to give all colonies an opportunity "to demonstrate their progress in the arts and industries of life, to foster the sentiment of Australasian federation, and generally to exhibit the varied resources of this great country...".[14] The Colony of Victoria had held the first of the

intercolonial exhibitions in 1866. In rivalry with NSW it went on to stage a total of two intercolonial and two international exhibitions, as against the NSW total of three intercolonial and one international exhibition.

All the other colonial capitals, and also Launceston, had held one international exhibition by the turn of the century. A recurring feature of these exhibitions was that they included sections for Fine Arts on the same basis as those for other products. There were both competitive and non-competitive sections. Judging was carried out by juries which reported formally on their decisions and, rather than selecting individual winners, awarded different gradings on the basis of merit. The results were subject to appeal. Decisions made in this way carried some authority, and works of art were therefore presented as products which could be objectively assessed. The audiences who received this message were very large, and represented a wide range of interests. It was estimated, for example, that almost one million people had paid to visit the *Centennial Exhibition* of 1888.[15] It is clear that the Commissioners did not envisage the role of the works of art as being simply a kind of entertainment to provide a diversion from the industrial exhibits. In fact, they found that interest in both the industrial exhibits and the works of art declined over time, and their response was to provide entertaining "side-shows" as a way of attracting visitors.[16]

Another highly competitive context in which competition in art was put on public display was in some of the colonial agricultural shows, notably those of the Agricultural Society of NSW (which was soon afterwards to involve itself with the administration of the Intercolonial Exhibition of 1870), and later the exhibitions of the Queensland National Association.[17] A few competitions were also held to get designs for practical commercial purposes.[18]

Through the development of these forms of competition in art, sponsors in the 19th century had created a preliminary scenario for the sponsors of the 20th century. Artists were now recognised as professionals who co-operated to compare and publicise their work, but who might also compete in various contexts, including the impressive halls of the great exhibitions, and who might aspire to the prestige of having their work acquired for the collections of the public art galleries. The work of art

was in process of becoming increasingly commodified. It was already regarded as an object of sufficient status to justify the establishment of public art galleries to display selected specimens, and it was now considered appropriate also for exhibition to a more popular audience (admittedly for educational reasons) in the context of a variety of other objects which had been manufactured or produced for purely practical purposes. A convention had been established that sponsors of competitions would use expert judges to assess the entries, and sponsors do not seem to have attempted to influence the judges and the results. For the public, the art competition within a major public exhibition was unmistakably part of a community event. The exhibitions of artists' societies might aim to achieve a similar status, but they did not have the same popular appeal. The commercial art competition had, however, been accepted as a practical way of encouraging sales and attracting viewers.

Formal art competitions, which are the most direct manifestation of competition between artists, have evolved during the twentieth century in the context of developments in the patronage and marketing of art, and have been continuously adapted to suit the purposes of sponsors or patrons. The timing and nature of these changes differed between the States, and in some respects it also differed significantly between the capitals and the country areas. New South Wales has consistently been the most active of the States in beginning and maintaining art competitions.

I propose to survey this evolution of art competitions during the twentieth century in relation to three successive phases. The first of these covers the period up to the end of the 1940s. The second extends from there to the end of the 1970s, and the third begins with the 1980s and ends, for purposes of this review, in 1999. These periods are by no means rigidly defined, nor are they necessarily mutually exclusive. They are, however, useful in highlighting significant developments in the field of art competitions, in analysing their implications, and in relating them to other contemporary developments in the patronage and marketing of art. As a preliminary to a more detailed consideration of aspects of art competitions, I will outline the nature of art competitions in each phase and the general context in which they operated.

During the first phase, up to the end of the 1940s, artists often acted as their own salesmen, showing work in their own studios and offering it for sale to the public art galleries. The regular exhibitions staged by artists' societies were an effective way of stimulating interest and sales, although to a limited clientele.[19] The Trustees of the AGNSW consistently visited the exhibitions of the major societies and made some purchases, but apparently not with any clear intention of supporting modern Australian art. Heather Johnson points out in her survey of Sydney art patronage at this time that Australian Modernist artists were unfortunate in having the zealous anti-Modernist, J. S. McDonald successively occupying the positions of Director of the AGNSW and the NGV between 1928 and 1941.[20] There were in Sydney, however, at least ten private galleries, three department stores and five bookshops exhibiting Australian art, and four commercial galleries were successful enough to survive the depression of the 1930s. Artists, including the Contemporary Group, exhibited at these galleries.[21] The commercial galleries often dealt in Australian art, although the emphasis was not on contemporary Australian art, but there was usually a strong bias towards imported art.[22] From the turn of the century onwards there were also several private art galleries in Melbourne, some with specialisations, and one in Perth.[23]

The relatively few competitions which were held, other than those staged by artists' societies, often had a practical purpose, for example to attract ideas for designs for purposes such as posters, or commemorative sculpture. The device of competition was occasionally used with some flair by commercial enterprises (for example, the *State Theatre Art Quest* of 1929), and by public galleries such as the Geelong Art Gallery as a way of acquiring works for their collections. A few competitions were also held in order to disseminate a message or commemorate a major event, particularly on occasions such as centenaries and sesquicentenaries.[24] Probably the most complex set of intentions leading to the initiation of competitions was in those cases where they were endowed by benefactors, who usually stipulated conditions which would, directly or indirectly, reflect both their generosity and their personal interests. Notable examples were, of course, the *Wynne, Archibald* and *Sulman Prizes*. Most of these new uses of competition occurred only a few times during this phase, and the intention behind them seems to have been simply an imaginative way of meeting a special need.

The second phase of competitions, from the 1950s to the 1970s, was given impetus by a number of factors including Australia's increasing affluence, its industrialisation and urbanisation, by rising standards of living, by wider availability of education, and by the growing interest in Australian culture which followed the end of World War II. Australian art was now increasingly becoming a marketable commodity, a change which incidentally had the effect of helping to define the professionalism of artists. A major factor in this development was the advent of commercial galleries specialising in Australian, and often contemporary Australian art. They were run by professional dealers who took initiatives in selecting and selling, and who were able to negotiate with both prospective buyers and artists on the basis of expert knowledge. They operated through stock rooms as well as exhibitions. Some funded a system of retainerships, and perhaps the most adventurous and successful of these was based in the gallery begun by Rudy Komon in Sydney in 1958. He held group or one-man exhibitions of the work of selected artists, and at the same time maintained a large stockroom of the works which he had acquired from his "stable" and from others. The "stable" was a group of artists whom he respected, and who received subsidies and active encouragement.[25]

On occasions, dealers might enter art objects in competitions on behalf of members of their stable. During the 1950s and 1960s, commercial galleries, some with particular specialisations, came and went in all the state capitals except Hobart. Melbourne was perhaps the most prolific, with a succession of fashionable galleries showing the work of contemporary artists.[26] Artists were now becoming less dependent on sales at the exhibitions run by their societies. They were, however, encountering a new kind of competition, because their work had to be acceptable to any gallery which took them on, and each gallery had its individual character and its own requirements.[27] This relationship was made clear to its members by the Australian Commercial Galleries Association when it pointed out that artists have to accept that the gallery with which they are associated is primarily their business agent, although it conceded that it was obviously desirable that there should be a friendship between the artist and the gallery director - business did not necessarily exclude friendship.[28]

Government assistance to the arts increased significantly during this period. J. W. O'Hagan, in his study of the relationship between the

state and the arts, cites several arguments which are used in justifying state subsidies.[29] the most popular being the public benefits which it generates in terms of development of national identity and prestige, in fostering the production of critical and innovative works, in provision for present and future generations, and, finally, in economic and social benefits. In Australia, there are two major types of public assistance to the visual arts. The first is the specialised agencies at all levels of government which have a direct responsibility to provide support for artists, and the second is the publicly funded art galleries, the role of which is to educate and entertain the public, and which may encourage interest in the work of living artists.

At Federal government level, a major initiative towards the end of this phase was the formal establishment in 1975 of the Australia Council as a statutory authority, succeeding the Australian Council for the Arts which, since 1967, had performed what was a largely advisory and administrative function. The new Council had the objectives of encouraging excellence in the arts, fostering a wider spread of interest and participation, and helping to develop a national identity. Its Visual Arts Board, one of the seven boards which specialised in different fields of the arts, saw its role as being to help artists to buy time for creative and experimental work, and also to encourage the acquisition of the works of living artists. Its policy of making direct grants to artists created a highly competitive situation in which grants were allocated by peer assessment, either on the basis of performance and promise, or as a way of allowing established artists time for creative work.[30] Obviously the existence of this scheme offered encouragement to artists, although only a small proportion of them actually benefited directly. Other sources of government support which were established within the same period included state government ministries with special responsibilities for the arts, and local organisations such as galleries, municipal authorities and Arts Councils in country towns. The activities of all these organisations reinforced the general idea that it was socially correct to support artists.

The second type of new government support for artists was the new public art galleries which were established during the period. Foremost among these, and financed by the Commonwealth Government, was the Australian National Gallery (later the National Gallery of Australia), which was established in 1976, and which had a strong responsibility

for Australian art, including contemporary art. A number of other new galleries supported by state governments were established during this period, a few in suburbs of the capital cities, but most in country towns. Not only did these create local interest in art and artists, but they were a shining example to towns which did not have galleries.

The question of provision of funding for the arts in general was now becoming a matter of community interest, and in 1977 the Myer Foundation set up a representative study group to investigate it. It was particularly concerned with the marketing prospects of visual artists. The major institutional problems which it identified as facing the visual arts included the lack of resources for the public galleries, and a lack of funds for exhibitions of contemporary visual arts. In its recommendations the group emphasised the fact that the best form of support for artists was to purchase their work. It recognised also, however, that art prizes could provide encouragement, and it suggested that one contribution which both businesses and individuals could make would be to offer prizes for locally produced art.[31]

During this period the numbers of art competitions increased quickly. Although they included some which had been initiated during the first phase, there was a general change in attitude, and several new types of competitions appeared. The idea of acquisitive competitions, which had been pioneered by Manly Art Gallery in Sydney as early as the 1920s, and by some public galleries in provincial Victoria in the 1930s, was taken up by a number of Sydney suburban municipalities, with or without galleries, and by shire councils in country NSW. It continued to be influential during the 1960s and 1970s. It was also adopted by galleries in country towns in most of the other states, and many of the competitions which resulted continued to be held annually for a number of years.

Purely commercial considerations associated with the sponsor's own business were behind the prizes offered in the 1950s by the *Australian Women's Weekly* and Leroy-Alcorso competitions for portraits and textile design respectively. Entries for the former supplied innovative copy and good publicity, and those for the latter provided designs which the sponsor hoped to be able to use.

A new development which appeared in the 1960s was, to borrow a phrase from the Australia Council, patronage "at arm's length".[32] This operated in two different ways. One way was that the sponsor simply subsidised a competition which had actually been organised by someone else. In return the sponsor's name was associated with the competition. For example, Caltex supported a variety of competitions in several states. Alternatively, competitions were actually staged by or on behalf of the sponsor. Examples of this approach in NSW were the *AMPOL Sculpture Prize* (1966-70), the *Transfield Prize* (1962-1971), and the *Tenth International Congress of Accountants Art Prize* of 1972. Two important Melbourne competitions were the *Georges Invitation Art Awards*, which ran from 1963 to 1985, and the *COMALCO Invitation Award for Sculpture*, which was offered from 1967 to 1972. Both of these incorporated a new concept which was that the competition was limited to artists who were invited to enter. In country Victoria there was the *Mildara* (later *Mildura*) *Sculpture Triennial*, which had a controversial existence between 1961 and 1988. The *Rubinstein Portrait Prize* was staged in Perth between 1960 and 1966 - an appropriate memorial to an art collector who was also a beautician. In Brisbane, the Johnsonian Club offered an art prize between 1961 and 1965, and there were art prizes at the Townsville Pacific Festival in the 1960s.

Art competitions were now often used also as a way of raising money for philanthropic purposes, and they were staged as community functions by organisations such as Rotary. Particularly in country districts, a number of prizes were associated with annual festivals, such as the Tumut Festival of the Falling Leaf and the Kempsey Festival of Spring, as well as with local art societies. Many competitions were run largely by amateurs, but a degree of professionalism was developing, based on a fairly standard administrative structure which was particularly necessary where the sponsor was not actively involved in running the event. It included an implicit proviso that, in order to maintain the credibility of the competition, organisers had to employ judges who had some recognisable expertise.

In this phase, sponsoring an art competition became accepted as a practical way in which the sponsor could show interest in cultural pursuits without necessarily possessing expertise, or even much interest, in the field of art. It was also useful in demonstrating

willingness to take part in community activities. For artists, art competitions offered a potential way of making money, and one in which they could take the initiative. Obviously, the chances that they would win were not particularly high, but at least they stood to gain some publicity, assuming that their work was included in the exhibition. For this reason, forthcoming competitions and the results of competitions which had been judged were now noted by artists themselves in periodicals such as the *CAS Broadsheets*. Notes of prospective competitions and results in all states were also published in *A and A* from its first issue in May 1963 until 1992. Tacit approval for competitions from an even more authoritative body was provided from the mid 1960s onwards by the AGNSW, which annually produced and distributed lists of competitions which were to be held in Australia in the coming year. Its list for 1965 included seventy-nine competitions, forty-five of which were based in NSW. The total of the first prizes which were offered amounted to some £25,300, and there were often additional prizes.

The early 1980s have been adopted as the beginning of the third phase in the evolution of art competitions. During this period some important government initiatives were taken, including general reviews and statements of policy, and an increasing emphasis on the economic aspects of art. Also during this period, artists themselves made positive moves to establish their own status formally. The establishment of the National Association for the Visual Arts in 1983 was significant for both sponsors and artists. It was the first body to represent the interests of artists nationally, and its existence demonstrated that artists considered themselves as professionals who stood to benefit from national solidarity. NAVA proceeded to develop this solidarity through the publication of a newsletter and the creation of a data base of artists in Australia. It also involved itself with research, and with some political lobbying. Its recognition of the importance of economic, as well as aesthetic issues was shown by the fact that it appointed as its Chairman Professor David Throsby, an economist who has specialised in research into the financial position of artists. In his paper given at Artists' Week during the Adelaide Festival in 1986, he stated: "Whether we like it or not, the creation, distribution and consumption of works of art is, and has always been, as much of an economic process as an aesthetic one".[33] NAVA's attitude to art competitions was shown in a practical way when it took

over from the AGNSW the responsibility for circulating information on them through its publication *Money for Visual Artists*. In it, it made the statement that one element of NAVA's primary agenda was to promote the professional status of the individual artist, and that one aspect of this was the prestige to be gained in entering competitions for awards and prizes.[34]

An important review centering on the Australia Council was the Inquiry into Commonwealth Assistance to the Arts by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure which published its report, *Patronage, Power and the Muse*, in 1986. It considered in detail the place of direct grants in support of the arts in general, a matter which was, of course, particularly relevant to grants made to artists by the Visual Arts Board. No comments were submitted by individual artists, but NAVA claimed on their behalf that creative artists should receive a higher proportion of funding in preference to the Council's research and development programs. On the other hand, Lou Klepac, an experienced curator and critic, submitted his view that grants were degrading to artists and that preference should be given to acquiring works of art from exhibitions, in order to encourage both dealers and purchasers. His ideas were echoed by the Australian Commercial Galleries Association.[35] The publication of the Report resulted in some changes in emphasis in the Council's operations, but the principle of government assistance to the arts, especially through grants, was maintained.[36]

Another document of importance to artists which appeared subsequently was *Creative Nation*, a statement of the cultural policy of the Keating Labour government in 1994. It had strong economic overtones, and its statement of the Commonwealth's role included "developing lively and sustainable cultural industries."[37] It proposed that artists should be encouraged to help themselves, and that priority should be given to audience development and marketing, to working with new technologies and to stimulating sponsorship for the arts from the private and corporate sectors. The Australia Council subsequently gave effect to these priorities.[38]

The Australia Council may be the most influential government agency which supports the arts, but it is by no means the only one. Hans Guldberg, in his survey of public attitudes to the arts in Australia,

showed that in 1991 there were 121 visual arts and crafts organisations in Australia, and that half of these had been established in the 1980s, with support from State and local governments and the Australia Council. The 1980s were clearly a developmental period. The 1990s were, however, also remarkable for the kinds of assistance with commercial implications which became available to artists through state government agencies.[39]

Artbank, which was established in 1980 by the Commonwealth Government, was originally subsidised, but is now a business venture. Its charter is to buy selected works by contemporary artists in order to create a collection from which items can be hired on a commercial basis. Two aspects of this arrangement have some significance in relation to art competitions. Firstly, Artbank staff make purchases from contemporary work in a variety of styles in order to provide a varied selection for their customers. A wide range of artists therefore have a chance of having their work purchased, and at the same time there is a degree of passive competition between them for sales. Selection policy is different from that of a public gallery because Artbank does not have an obligation to build a permanent collection based on art historical considerations. Secondly, because it has to be self-supporting, Artbank, like commercial dealers, has to take account of public tastes. It has a rather more open market, however, because clients (and particularly business firms) who hire works on a short term basis may be keen to show how progressive they are by choosing avant-garde works. The same reasoning may well apply to sponsors of art competitions, and the commercial concept on which Artbank operates may have helped to attract some potential commercial sponsors of art competitions.[40]

Several new public art galleries were established during this phase, continuing the trend which had begun in the second phase. A new feature, however, was the opening in several capital cities of galleries devoted to contemporary art. These have helped to promote the status of contemporary art, making it an up-market and controversial field.[41] Together these new institutions must have provided some encouragement for prospective sponsors of competitions. Perhaps even more significant evidence of the importance which was now officially assigned to art was that at the beginning of this phase new buildings had just been completed for the AGWA and the MAGNT, and that soon

afterwards there was a new building for the QAG, and the AGNSW was doubled in size. Major extensions were later completed for the AGSA, and begun for the NGV.

During the 1980s and 1990s art competitions proliferated as never before. There were two main streams - those aimed at professionals and those for amateurs. In general, the professionally oriented prizes were sponsored by corporations, galleries, local government bodies and large bequests. Some new commercially sponsored prizes with big prize money and expert organisation appeared in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. In the 1980s, these included in Sydney the *Doug Moran National Portrait Prize*, offering a prize of $100,000, and the *Australian Maritime Art Award*, with prize money of $10,000. In Melbourne there was the *Moët and Chandon Fellowship*, with an award of $50,000 plus a year's residence in France, and in Queensland the *Gold Coast City Art Prize* of $10,000. In the 1990s there were more and larger prizes, notably in Sydney the *Seppelt Award*, with a prize of $70,000, and in Melbourne the *Cecily and Colin Rigg Craft Award* of $30,000 and *Contempora5* with a prize of $100,000. In Adelaide, the *Visy Board Art Prize* consisted of $30,000 plus 1000 bottles of premium shiraz, the *Anne and Gordon Samstag Award* offered five scholarships, with stipends of $28,000, and the *Fleurieu Prize* in South Australia offered $50,000 for Australian landscape painting. A prize of $30,000 based in Launceston was the *Blundstone Contemporary Art Prize*, offered once only in 1996. As well as the more spectacular prizes, there were increasing numbers of competitions based on specialisations, such as the *Wagga Wagga Contemporary Glass Exhibition*, the *Peter Sparks Memorial Pastel Award* in Newcastle, the *Kedumba Art Award for Drawing* at Wentworth Falls, and the *Australian Printmedia Awards* offered by the University of Western Sydney. This array of awards shows that some major commercial sponsors were prepared to be seen to support individual artists, although there must have been competition for their sponsorship with other branches of the arts, particularly the performing arts, and with sport.

Another development during this phase, was that for the first time awards were offered specifically for the work of Aboriginal artists. In 1993 the *RAKA Award* of $10,000 for different areas of Aboriginal arts was given for the visual arts, and the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Award* was initiated with a first prize of

$15,000. The *National Aboriginal Art Award* of $15,000 and the *Botany Aboriginal Art Competition* with a prize of $10,000 were initiated in 1994, the Year of Indigenous People. At the same time, many competitions, run by a variety of groups such as art societies, municipalities, clubs, schools, universities and community groups with differing levels of amateurism and professionalism, continued to function, or were initiated.

Unlike grants made by the Australia Council and purchases by Artbank, art competitions offer a kind of patronage in which the sponsor provides the award and pays for the administration of the competition. Although there is admittedly no real basis for comparison of expenditure on schemes which are so different, it is interesting to compare the amounts which have been made available to individual artists through the three types of patronage. It is convenient to do this for the year 1995/96, by which time Artbank had become completely self-supporting, and NAVA had issued the second of its lists of forthcoming competitions. In that year, Artbank spent a total of $251,300 on purchases of artwork. It was estimated that its collection then had a current value of $11.3 million.[42] The significance of this figure is, of course, affected by the fact that the works had been purchased over the whole period of its existence, including the initial period when it was heavily subsidised, and that values would have appreciated over the period. In the same year, the Australia Council made about 125 grants to individuals for fellowships of different types within Australia and overseas, at a total cost of some $1,435,000. Its Visual Arts/Craft budget of $7,915,855 covered expenditure on a variety of other activities such as overseas studios, international exhibitions and promotions, international visitors, national and state organisations, publications, and special projects.[43] By contrast, the prizes for Australian art competitions in 1996 which were listed in the edition of *Money for Visual Artists* for that year (excluding those which were government funded) totalled about $1,850,000, ranging from $25 to $100,000.[44] This sum does not include administrative expenses borne by sponsors. On this basis, it would seem that the private sector had been relatively generous to artists.

As has been mentioned earlier, in the development of this kind of patronage a more or less standard mechanism for the operation of competitions had now evolved. It was associated with the increasingly

professional handling of competitions, and particularly in the case of the major ones, of employment by sponsors of consultants to run the competition. It is based on a functioning team consisting of the initiator of the competition, the sponsor who finances it, the facilitator who organises it, and the artists who choose, or are invited, to enter. The judges are associated with the team as expert consultants who make their decisions independently of the other team members, on the same basis as the Australia Council's "arm's length" principle, and it is understood that these decisions will be accepted by sponsors and entrants.

There are no hard and fast divisions between the three phases, and in fact several types of competitions continued to be represented in each. There are, however, differences in character. In the first phase, competitions operated in a relatively traditional way. A few sponsors initiated competitions which were to some degree experimental, but their purpose was unambiguous, and the rationale behind them seems to have been accepted without question. The second phase was marked by increasing commercial ingenuity in the use of competitions, for reasons which now included enhancing the image of the sponsor, receiving acquisitions, promoting an ideology, and fund raising, as well as generating interest in contemporary art and sales. In the third phase there was greater emphasis on economic aspects and on the commercialisation of the competition process, and there were some very large prizes. There was an increasingly high level of sophistication and special expertise in the staging of many competitions, and outcomes were often carefully planned. There were also other competitions which were basically philanthropic in intention. Many continued to be staged by the artists themselves. I will consider some representative competitions in more detail in relation to these phases.

ENDNOTES

1 Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition 1875, *Official Catalogue of Exhibits*, p. 207.

2 David Throsby, 'The Political Economy of the Visual Arts', *CAS Broadsheet (South Australian Branch)*, Adelaide, Aug. 1986, p. 3.

3 *Rules of the Victorian Society of Fine Arts*. Goodhugh and Hough, Melbourne, 1856.

4 The first of these societies held an exhibition in Hobart Town in 1845. (J. A. Ferguson, *Bibliography of Australia*, Vol III, 1839-1845, p. 488). Other Tasmanian societies included the Tasmanian Art Society (later the Art Society of Tasmania), founded in 1884 for professional artists, and the Launceston Art Society for lady members, begun in 1893. (*The Launceston Art Society in Retrospect 1891-1983*, QVMAG, Launceston, 1983, pp. 7, 10). The Sydney Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in

Australia was formed in 1847 and continued for about ten years. The NSW Academy of Art functioned between 1871 and 1880). The Art Society of NSW (later the Royal Art Society) was formed by a breakaway group, from which the Society of Artists subsequently broke away in 1880 and 1895 respectively. Both were for professional members, and both held exhibitions of colonial art. The Art Society also ran Art Unions. (NSW Academy of Art, *Catalogue of Colonial Works of Art*, 1872). The Society of Fine Arts in Victoria was succeeded by the Victorian Academy of Art, which had some overtones of the Royal Academy through its vice-regal patronage and its strong social role for both artists and the public. After successive breakaways and mergers it became the Victorian Artists' Society in 1888, with its own gallery (C. B. Christesen, ed., *The Gallery on Eastern Hill*, VAS, Melbourne, 1970, p. 11). The South Australian Society of Arts, (later the Royal Society of Arts, which was founded in South Australia in about 1856), also had vice-regal patronage. A breakaway group of professional artists formed the South Australian Academy of Arts. (*Rules of the South Australian Academy of Arts*, Scrymgour and Sons, Adelaide, 1887) The Queensland Art Society was established in 1887, with the aim of holding annual exhibitions because no other sales venues were available, and the Western Australian Society of Arts, had its first exhibition in 1896-97.

5 *Report of the South Australian Society of Arts for the year 1861 and list of prizes for the October Exhibition 1862*, The Society, Adelaide, 1862.

6 Medals given by the NSW Academy of Art in 1872 were for best watercolour, best oil, and best painting by an amateur, and the Academy also held an Art Union with prizes to be selected from the exhibition. (NSW Academy of Art, *Catalogue of Colonial Works of Art 1872*) Societies in Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia do not seem to have offered prizes during this period.

7 Art Society of Tasmania, *Fifteenth Annual Exhibition* [Catalogue], Hobart, 1899, p. 23.

8 A few painters, suffering from lack of patronage, resorted to the device of personal Art Unions. As was the case in Art Unions in Britain, it was the subscribers who were in competition, but in Australia the winning subscribers received one of the artist's paintings, rather than winning money which allowed them to choose their own purchase (T. Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, OUP, Melbourne, 1985, p. 22).

9 L. B. Cox, *The National Gallery of Victoria 1861 to 1960: a search for a collection*, The Gallery, Melbourne, c1970, p. 15.

10 Bonyhady op. cit., p. 2.

11 AGNSW TM, 8 Aug. 1884.

12 'The Art Society and the Trustees of the Art Gallery', *SMH* 15 Apr. 1885, p. 6. AGNSW TM, 22 July 1886.

13 AGNSW TM, 22 Dec. 1897.

14 Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne, 1888, Official Record, Melbourne 1890, p. 206.

15 ibid., p. 127.

16 ibid., p. 272. The 1866 *Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition* had a large display of "Ornamental Arts" grouped in separate courts for each colony. The 1875 *International Exhibition* had competitive sections, as did the 1880-81 *International Exhibition*, and in the latter juries awarded medals to all exhibits judged to be of the first order of merit in each class, while those of the second and third orders received certificates. The reports of the jury were published, which increased the educational value of the event for both competitors and viewers (*Official Record 1880-81*, pp. 16, 427). Local exhibitors were graded in the same way in the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition of 1888, where a number of well known artists such as J. Ashton, A. Streeton, F. McCubbin, T. Roberts and G. Nerli took part, and Ellis Rowan, a woman natural history painter, received a gold medal. (*Official Record 1890*, pp. 916, 1046, 1996).

The *Sydney Intercolonial Exhibition* of 1870 offered bronze and silver medals for oils for professionals in specified subject categories, and had separate sections for amateurs. *(Report of the Intercolonial Exhibition 1870).* The Fine Arts Section of the *Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition* of 1863 had both a non-competitive section and a competitive section which consisted of exhibits from the exhibition of the Academy of Arts. *(Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition 1873*, pp. 89, 93). At the *Adelaide Jubilee International Exhibition* of 1887 three classes of awards were offered, and, although the Chairman of the jury reported that the colonial exhibits were not encouraging, three awards of the first order of merit were made (*Adelaide Jubilee International Exhibition 1887*, pp. 47, 132). There were three classes also in the *Tasmanian Exhibition* at Launceston in 1891, where W. S. Piguenit received a special first award (*Tasmanian Exhibition* 1893, pp. 59, 60). The inspiration for these awards would not have come from the *Great Exhibition* in London in 1851, which was not concerned with fine arts, but it might have been influenced by the *International Exhibition* of 1862 at South Kensington, which had an art gallery, and published jury reports on exhibits. (James. S. Virtue, *The Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue of the International Exhibition 1862*, Virtue, London and N. Y., 1862).

17 The Agricultural Society of NSW began awarding medals at its annual shows of stock and associated equipment in 1827, and by 1872 its catalogue listed 17 classes covering competitive and non-competitive oils, water colours, crayons and etchings. (*Agricultural Society of NSW 1872*, [Catalogue] pp. 71ff). The *Queensland National Association Exhibition* of 1884 included Fine Arts in its Industrial section, with some 20 classes.

18 In 1881 the Sydney firm of John Sands offered prizes for watercolours of Australian subjects to be reproduced as cards. ('Fine Arts', *SMH*, 16 Nov. 1881, p. 7). Architectural competitions included relief carvings at Parliament House, Victoria in 1887, a marble group for the Victoria Markets, Sydney and a statue for Adelaide, both in 1899. ('Sculpture', The *Australasian Art Review*, 1 Apr. 1899, p. 20.)

19 The exhibitions run by artists' societies gave the entrants a kind of status. They also created social occasions and publicity which were useful ways of attracting viewers.

20 The Blaxland, Grosvenor and Macquarie Galleries continued to operate for long periods. (Heather Johnson, *The Sydney Art Patronage System 1890-1940*, Bungoona Technologies, Sydney, 1997, p. 62).

21 ibid.

22 Rubery Bennett, who opened his Fine Art Gallery in the 1920s, was a dealer with real sympathy for Australian artists. (K. C. Harper, *The Life and Work of Rubery Bennett*, Copperfield Publishing, Sydney, 1979.).

23 In Melbourne, Georges Department Store operated a gallery selling contemporary Australian art for a short period from 1945. (K. Dunstan, *The Store on the Hill*, Georges Ltd., Melbourne, 1979, p. 152). The store was later to sponsor an ambitious art competition. In Perth, the Hotchin Gallery, opened in 1947, was also to be a base for art competitions. (Janda Gooding, 'One man's vision' i*n Sir Claude Hotchin Art Bequests* [Touring Exhibition Catalogue], Perth, 1992.

24 The *Australia at War Competitive Exhibition* in Melbourne in 1945, aimed to illustrate the role of the fighting forces and also the skills of both professional and non-professional artists. [*Catalogue*] 1945. The 1948 *Catholic Centenary Prize* celebrated the centenary of the Catholic Church in Victoria.

25 Patrick McCaughey, *The First Gallery in Paddington, the Artists and their work tell the story of the Rudy Komon Gallery,* Edwards and Shaw, Sydney, 1981.

26 The pioneer of this type of gallery was the Johnstone Gallery in Brisbane, opened in 1951. The Skinner Galleries opened in Perth in 1958, and Gallery A in Melbourne in 1959. The Bonython Art Gallery was established in Adelaide in 1960 and extended to Sydney in 1965.

27 For example, the Australian Galleries, which opened in Melbourne in 1956, had a policy of not showing abstraction. Christopher Heathcote, *The rise of Australian Art 1946-1968*, Text Publishing Co., Melbourne, 1995, p. 159.

28 *Australian Commercial Galleries Association Membership Handbook*, Sydney, The Association, 1985, p. 11.

29 J. W. O'Hagan, *The State and the Arts*, Edward Elder, Cheltenham, U.K., 1998, p. 40.

30 No recompense from successful artists was required by the Council, which also gave subsidies for training projects, exhibitions and periodicals, for artists' organisations, and for helping public art museums to acquire significant works by contemporary artists. In addition, the Board subsidised some artists' organisations. It also commssioned a number of research studies. (Australia Council for the Arts, *First Annual Report*, Jan.-Dec. 1973, pp. 83, 84, The Council, Sydney; Australia Council for the Arts, *Annual Report* 1979-80, pp. 70, 71, 11, The Council, Sydney).

31 Private Support for the Arts Study Group, *Report*, Myer Foundation, Melbourne, 1977.

32 Australia Council. *Annual Report, 1995-96*, The Council, Sydney, 1996, p. 7.

33 David Throsby, 'The Political Economy of the Visual Arts', in *CAS Broadsheet* (South Australian Branch), Adelaide, Aug. 1986, p.3.

34 The Association is an umbrella group which claims to represent "the collective interests of over 60,000 members, including national and state art museums, visual arts organisations, contemporary art spaces, commercial galleries, art education, art publications, artists' co-operatives, individual artists and allied services", (*Money for Visual Artists*. NAVA, Sydney, 1991, p. 4).

35 Australia. Parliament. House of Representatives, *Report of the Standing Committee on Expenditure, 1986, Patronage, Power and the Muse*, AGPS, Canberra, 1986. Exhibit 49, L. Klepac, 1984, and Exhibit 37, E. Watson, Australian Commercial Galleries Association, 1984.

36 The Committee concluded that it was appropriate for the Australia Council to have responsibility for subsidies, acting as a buffer between Government and the detail of grant decisions. (ibid., pp. 191, 5) The outcome for the Council included some administrative streamlining, greater emphasis on research and development, attention to support for professional development, and improved liaison with State and local government art authorities. (Australia Council, *Annual Report* 1986-87, pp. 3, 4, 15).

37 *Creative Nation, Commonwealth Cultural Policy, Australia Council*, Canberra, 1994, pp. 12, 17.

38 There were to be taxation benefits for business sponsorships. "Earnback", a scheme to advance funds to finance arts projects, was not successful, but the strong emphasis on individual grants continued, and in 1995-96 more than 120 grants were given to artists for professional development, and over 60 grants were directed specifically to aboriginal artists and groups. The Australia Council is wholly funded by the Commonwealth Government, and received a total of almost $73 million in 1995-96. (Australia Council, *Annual reports, 1994-95*, p. 2, and *1995-96*, pp. 18, 45, 111, 62).

39 In addition to the state government Ministries with responsibilities for the arts, which were mainly set up in the 1960s, these organisations included local galleries and art societies, Arts Councils, Crafts Councils and festivals. They offered artists a range of sources of funding and other support. (H. H. Guldberg, *Artburst*, Australia Council, Sydney, 1992, p. 36) Entries in recent issues of *Money for Visual Artists*, NAVA's guide to future art competitions, show emphasis at both Federal and state levels on arts grants intended to support development of innovative programs to help to establish new or niche markets, to fund increases in production, or to foster the use of new formats, techniques or content. Examples are NT Arts Major New Initiative Grants; WA Department for the Arts Creative Developments Fund; NSW Ministry for the Arts - Women and the Arts Fellowships. (*Money for Visual Artists*, NAVA, Sydney, 1996, pp. 24, 25).

40 The functions and finances of the scheme were reviewed by the incoming government in 1997, and it was decided that it should be retained in public ownership, but that it should become self-supporting. It has achieved this objective. (Department of Communications and the Arts *Annual Report* 1996-97, p. 37). The collection now contains some 8,000 works by over 3,000 artists (*Artbank 1 1998*, p. 5). Customers range from overseas embassies to government agencies, corporations and individuals.

41 New galleries specialising in contemporary art are the Museum of Modern Art at Heide in Melbourne, established in 1981, the Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart, in 1986, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, in 1989, and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, 1989.

42 Department of Communications and the Arts, *Annual Report* 1996-97, The Department, Canberra, 1997, pp. 250, 7).

43 Australia Council, *Annual Report* , 1995-96, The Council, Sydney, 1996, pp. 106 -113.

44 *Money for visual artists*, NAVA, Sydney, 1996.

CHAPTER 2

THE FIRST PHASE OF SPONSORSHIP

In this chapter I will discuss a number of art competitions which were sponsored in Australia during the first of the three phases which were outlined in Chapter 1 - that is, during the period between Federation and the end of the 1940s. In doing so, I will group competitions in relation to the various categories of sponsors who have begun and supported them.

A sponsor in this context is, of course, the person or group which provides practical support for a competition through funding or provision of services or both. The sponsor may be the initiator of a competition, or may simply contribute to the running of a competition initiated by someone else. Most sponsors present themselves as patrons of the arts, a view which differs from the legal distinction between patron and sponsor, in which a patron is a person who makes a gift, while a sponsor makes an investment. On this basis, sponsorship is defined as a mutually acceptable commercial relationship between parties in which one "in the course of business, trade or profession, seeks to promote or enhance an image... in association with an... event".[1] In this model, although perhaps not necessarily in practice, a patron's motives are altruistic, while a sponsor's are commercial, presupposing that the sponsorship relates to some form of business activity which will benefit from the transaction. This kind of relationship applies in differing degrees to most sponsored art competitions, and it is demonstrated by the reasons for which competitions have been sponsored. Naturally, the degree of involvement which sponsors have with the individual competitions which they support varies considerably, but in most cases they probably exercise some influence, directly or indirectly. Competition based on bequests, for example, may seem to be the ultimate in remote control, but the deceased sponsor may continue to exercise significant constraints which are difficult to remove.

For the purposes of this discussion I will differentiate between various categories of sponsors on the basis of their motivations for holding competitions. They form two broad categories - the art professionals, and those who are not professionally involved with art, but have some kind of interest in it, commercial or otherwise. The first category

consists of the artists themselves, and also includes organisations of various kinds which have responsibilities for art, such as the major state public art galleries, and other public art galleries and local government agencies. Public galleries often administer competitions on behalf of other sponsors, rather than actually being sponsors themselves, but this is a distinction which tends to become blurred over time. The second category of sponsors are not art professionals, but have an interest in some aspect of art. They include individuals whose apparent motive is to reward or provide support for artists. They include also sponsors who have one or other of two kinds of commercial motives - those who wish to canvass ideas for a design for a particular project, and a more diverse group consisting of those who expect to benefit from their sponsorship in some other way, often in terms of public relations. Yet another group consists of sponsors who wish to make use of art as a way of promoting ideas - that is, for propaganda purposes. An even more disparate category of sponsors is the many groups in the community which sponsor art competitions for a variety of reasons which include offering encouragement to local artists or supporting local events or charities.

The competitions to be discussed have been chosen with the aim of presenting a group which is reasonably representative of each category, and which includes competitions which were significant in terms of the period or of the nature of the competition itself. The selection has, however, been influenced by availability of relevant information.

Competitions sponsored by artists

It was the artists themselves, through their societies, who began holding formal competitions, although often with the support of some outside sponsorship. Competitions which artists staged during the colonial period have already been mentioned. Some of these continued intermittently into the 20th century. It was significant, for example, that the RQAS, when it received a government grant in 1900, used it to fund prizes for the best work by local artists.[2] In NSW in the 1920s, the Society of Artists had a brief campaign of offering donated prizes for non-members, presumably as a way of attracting new members.[3] Six years later, it began offering an annual award for its own members, ostensibly as a way of improving standards, but presumably also to attract the interest of viewers. The award was given only three times, perhaps because the Society had by then become virtually an academy

of established artists, and had no need to resort to prizes to attract attention.[4] The more conservative RAS was less interested in competition, and did not begin offering prizes until the 1950s, and then only for works by young artists. Its Victorian counterpart, the VAS, which had a strong tradition of exhibiting, offered a prize for drawing in the 1940s. Some years later, the Society reported that holding a major competition with a donated prize had a marked effect on the standard of work submitted and the numbers of visitors and sales.[5]

Several smaller and more specialised artists' societies such as the Australian Painter-Etchers Society and the Australian Watercolour Institute have never offered prizes, or possibly because, like their British counterparts, they were not in favour of competition. Similarly, the two women's groups, the Sydney Society of Women Painters and the Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors did not offer prizes publicly, although they held training competitions for members.[6] The amateur Artists Society of Canberra first gave prizes in 1927.

The more traditional artists' societies continued to use prizes to attract an audience. The CAS used them for the same reason, but with the special intention of publicising what it considered to be a new conception of art - "visual forms which... are original and creative or which strive to give expression to progressive contemporary thought and life... ".[7] Exhibition was a strong priority for the Society, which had been established in Melbourne in 1938, in opposition to the Academy of Art favoured by Prime Minister Robert Menzies. It held its first exhibition in 1939, and the donated prize was shared between surrealist paintings by James Gleeson and Eric Thake. Both paintings were then presented to the NGV, which, under the Directorship of Eric Westbrook, who had been appointed two years earlier, was willing to receive them - an acquisition which would have been highly unlikely during the regime of his predecessor, Daryl Lindsay. The whole project represented the use of competition to highlight originality rather than to reward conformity. The NSW Branch of the CAS, established one year later, followed suit by offering prizes at its exhibitions from the 1950s onwards. Both branches saw competitions as a way of boosting sales.

A different concept of competition in art, again administered by artists, was represented in the *Australia at War* exhibition which was held in 1945. The SMH, although commenting that it contained much work which was below standard, remarked on its significance:

> *It is in such a show, unconnected with the activities of rival art societies, that one can appreciate the changes which have taken place in art in the last few years. Few of the paintings are concerned with that order of realism which once dominated painting.*[8]

This exhibition was an initiative of the Melbourne-based Artists' Advisory Panel which, during World War II, had worked with its NSW counterpart, the War Art Council, to protect the interest of artists and to develop community interest in art. Although officially sponsored by the Australian Council for Education in Music and the Arts, it was in fact organised by a committee of artists, with the patronage of military and community dignitaries. It was actually a cluster of some seventeen competitions, all associated with the major theme of the War, and it provided a variety of subject categories, with special sections for servicemen and amateurs. Commercial enterprises and citizens were encouraged to display their patriotism by donating prizes, and there was much favourable press comment. Standards for the competition were established by the appointment of well known artists as judges.[9] The Exhibition generated enormous public interest when it toured the capitals of the eastern states and Newcastle in 1945 and 1946, and, as art historian Bernard Smith has said, it " began the development of a new popular audience for Australian art".[10] It is not clear whether the primary intention was to confront the public with the realities of war or to attract a new audience for art, but it succeeded brilliantly in doing both. It also succeeded in abolishing state boundaries between groups of artists, at least temporarily.[11]

These competitions continued a practice which had become accepted in Australia, and, because they were held by artists themselves, they were a clear indication of the attitudes of artists to competitions. In effect they represented co-operative efforts to exchange ideas, to attract public interest, and to encourage sales. To the general public, they probably represented artists as professionals who had special skills and a marketable product. The CAS in particular demonstrated its professional concerns by exploiting competition to demonstrate new ideas. The *Australia at War* exhibition was even more entrepreneurial,

and it is significant that it made a clear distinction between the work of amateurs and of professionals. By concentrating on a subject of universal concern, it effectively broadened the horizons of public interest, and it helped to create a new non-elitist conception of art. Competition was being used to create public interest in art, and particularly in contemporary art.

Competitions held in State public galleries

Artists, as producers, had a professional interest in art competitions. Galleries were in a sense consumers, and therefore had different concerns in promoting art within their communities. Some of the State public galleries were pioneers in holding art competitions, or in becoming involved with competitions which they staged on behalf of benefactors. Although the NGV had celebrated its first exhibition in 1864 by awarding an art prize of £200 to Nicholas Chevalier, it does not seem to have held another competition until 1941, when Ernest Buckmaster won the prize of £500. Apparently, it was considered that the response did not justify repeating the competition.[12]

The AGNSW, on the other hand, initiated some competitions itself. In the 1890s it had run an acquisitive competition for watercolour drawings of local scenery as a way of strengthening its collection in this area. In 1918, as a patriotic gesture, the Trustees decided to invite artists to submit competitive sketches dealing with Australian war-time activities, with the idea that the Gallery might purchase selected paintings based on these. The plan did not eventuate, apparently because it was submitted to the Department of Defence, which would permit only selected artists to do the work, negating the idea of competition.[13] The Gallery was, however, an active administrator of competitions on behalf of other sponsors. Usually these donors did not merely supply money to be spent at the discretion of the Gallery - they stipulated that it was to be used to provide prizes for specified types of competitions. They were in fact early representatives of an important type of sponsor - the individual benefactor. Benefactions of this type during the first phase of competitions included the now almost legendary trio of the *Wynne Art Prize* for landscape (first awarded in 1897), the *Archibald Prize* for portraiture (begun in 1921), and the *Sulman Prize* for subject or genre painting (begun in 1936). Since they have become almost completely identified with the AGNSW over the long periods of their existence, I

will treat them as gallery-based competitions, but the fact is that because of the conditions imposed by the original sponsors, each represents a different conception of an art competition.

It is serendipitous for the Gallery that the three competitions are mutually complementary in terms of subject matter, and even in the method of judging. Certainly the *Archibald* and *Wynne* entries are both judged by the Trustees, but different approaches to the judging of each of them have been developed over time, while the *Sulman* is not judged by the Trustees, although the Trustees choose the judges. These competitions have been shaped by the Gallery, their prize money has been supplemented by it, and they, and in particular the *Archibald*, have been a continuing source of controversy focussing on the Gallery. In return, they have become an essential feature of the Gallery's tradition and of its program, and have made a major contribution to its public image.

The *Wynne Prize* is the veteran which introduced the Trustees of the AGNSW to the concept of major art prizes. There is little evidence as to Richard Wynne's motivation in establishing the *Prize*. His will simply required that the proceeds of his bequest "were to be paid to the Australian Artist providing the best Landscape Painting of Australian scenery in oils or watercolours or the best production of Figure Sculpture executed by an Australian Sculptor". The decision on the merits or nature of the painting or sculpture was to be arrived at and finally settled by the Trustees of the AGNSW.[14] Wynne's own involvement with the competition was therefore limited to stipulating the general subject matter, endowing a generous prize, and placing all further responsibility in the hands of the Trustees. The fact that he had some interest in art had been shown by his presentation of a painting to the AGNSW in 1877. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that the main reasons for his later generosity were his own love of the bush (he was one of the earliest citizens to have a summer residence at Mount Wilson in the Blue Mountains),[15] and also the influence of his neighbour Eccleston du Faur, a foundation Trustee, and later President of Trustees, and an enthusiast about the bush as a subject for art. The fact that all Wynne's other bequests went to charities suggests that he had no special personal interests.

From the inception of the *Wynne Prize* the Trustees gave it a low profile. They advertised the competition in the main daily papers, but they seem to have based their judgements largely on their inspections of the chief annual exhibitions of art societies in NSW.[16] There was no special exhibition of entries, but admittedly some of the short listed works, including the winners, had already been purchased and exhibited by the Gallery. The Trustees were apparently dissatisfied with the limitations on the jurisdiction of the *Prize*, because in 1917 they asked for an opinion on the possibility of extending it to cover the best work of art, painting or sculpture, executed by an Australian artist. The Crown Solicitor's response was simply that the *Prize* could not be awarded outside the limits of the terms of the gift as specified.[17] Clearly, even in view of the popularity of landscape paintings, the Trustees did not envisage using the *Prize* as an attraction for the public, and it was not until the 1940s that selected entries were exhibited along with those from the Archibald.

It is not possible to assess the amount of public interest generated by the *Wynne Prize* alone, because attendance figures cover the *Wynne, Archibald* and *Sulman* exhibitions together. Similarly, it is not possible to assess the numbers of entries which were considered, because they included an unknown number from the exhibitions of the artists' societies. At the 1898 competition, four oils and three pieces of statuary were entered specifically for the *Wynne Prize.*[18] It is easier to assess the position of the *Wynne* after the advent of the *Archibald* as its rival by comparing the references made to them at the meetings of the Trustees. In 1935, for example, the *Wynne* had seventy-four entries for a prize which was then worth about £45, while the *Archibald* had 120 entries for a prize of about £390. By 1944, decreasing income from the bequest meant that the Wynne was offering a prize of about £28 as against £445 for the Archibald. [19] The results for the Wynne up to the end of the 1940s included many recurring winners, notably Hans Heysen and Lister Lister, each with nine wins, Elioth Gruner with seven, and some others with smaller tallies. Nevertheless there were some more adventurous decisions - for example, between 1902 and 1933, the *Prize* was awarded to sculptures six times. Although women entered consistently, a woman won only once. This was Lorna Nimmo, the winner in 1941, the year in which she also won the *NSW Travelling Scholarship.* There is no way of knowing how the original sponsor would have reacted to the results, but it is clear that the Trustees used

the *Wynne Prize* to present to the public their own generally conservative taste in landscape painting.

There was little constructive press comment on the *Wynne Prize*. In the 1920s there was usually a brief announcement of the winner, which was later combined with the *Archibald* announcement, and often included a brief description of the painting. In the 1930s there was at least one complaint in the Press about the method of judging, and the fact that failure to exhibit the entries deprived both the public and artists of interest and of an educational opportunity.[20] Later decisions which attracted criticism were that the awards for 1942 and 1944 went to Douglas Watson and Sali Herman respectively for paintings of Sydney cityscapes rather than rural scenes, and for 1947 to Russell Drysdale for his painting of the harsh countryside around Sofala.[21] In 1948 the *Bulletin* critic complained of inconsistencies in the attitude of the Trustees, pointing out that if there were grounds for the conventional Dargie receiving the *Archibald Prize*, there could be none for the "modern" Drysdale receiving the *Wynne*.[22]

The *Archibald Prize* has always dominated the competitions administered by the AGNSW. Reasons for this include the fact that it was a prize for a portrait, and in particular a portrait of a distinguished person - two features which interested the public, who found it easy to relate to portraits. It offered substantial prize money (at that time the most generous in the world),[23] and also good publicity - features which were important to artists. Jules Francois Archibald's bequest for a prize for portraiture was no casual decision. His Will was a testament of his personal concerns. There are three major bequests apart from those to his family. His endowment of a fund, administered by the Australian Journalists' Association, "for the relief of distressed Australian journalists", reflected his remarkable contribution to journalism in Australia, particularly as the belligerent editor of *The Bulletin*. The provision which he made for a memorial fountain to be designed by a French sculptor and to include three groups of allegorical statuary, was probably a tribute to his love of France, as well as a token of his respect for the AIF (which it commemorated) and a way of ensuring that he himself had a visible and permanent memorial in Sydney - as it transpired, in Hyde Park.

The bequest which established the *Archibald Prize* reflects his Trusteeship in the AGNSW, which in turn reflected his interest in art. He also bequeathed three paintings to the Gallery. He was aware of the interest of his fellow Trustees in portraiture, having seconded a motion "to invite artists of special distinction to paint and present their own portraits for exhibition in the National Art Gallery of NSW".[24] The Trustees put on record his active interest in the advancement of the AGNSW and in the encouragement of Australian art.[25] He was naturally aware of the existence of the *Wynne Prize*, to which a portrait prize would be a fitting complement. As a former journalist, he no doubt had a shrewd idea of the interest of the public in the personalities of the famous. The "preferential" clause, which is the only qualification which he imposed in his Will on the nature of the prize, is often quoted, but frequently overlooked in practice. It simply expresses his preference that the portrait should be of some "man or woman distinguished in Art, Letters, Science, or Politics". It is perhaps fair to interpret this as an attempt to build into the award a notion of recording citizens who have made a contribution to the community. Lionel Lindsay, also a Trustee, claimed that Archibald had discussed with him the idea of starting something like the National Portrait Gallery in London, but that, by limiting his prize to painters resident in Australia, he had put an end to the idea of attracting entries from Australians, such as Longstaff and Lambert, who were resident in London.[26] His protege, Florence Rodway, however, felt that his bequest was more concerned with helping young painters than with a passion for portraits.[27] The amount of the prize was to vary in relation to income received from the bequest, which amounted to one tenth of the estate, and yielded about £400 on the first occasion.

A more detailed account of the *Archibald Prize* is given in Appendix 2. In the present context, I will comment briefly on its evolution up to the end of the 1940s. Clearly, the attitude of the Trustees to the portrait reflects traditional concern with realistic representation, and with the dignity associated with the genre of portraiture, which no longer exists but which would have been accepted by Archibald. It is interesting, however, that in 1924, A.G. Stephens, a literary critic who had worked for Archibald on the *Bulletin*, claimed that McInnes had been awarded the prize for painting and design as distinct from true portraiture.[28] Until the end of the 1940s the Trustees simply chose the portrait which they considered to be the best in the traditional sense, making no

attempt to reward a variety of types of portraits or to encourage emerging painters. Consequently there were several successive awards to painters such as McCubbin, Longstaff, Dargie and Meldrum, resulting in a total of only twelve different winners in almost thirty years. There was some correspondence in the Press for and against the idea of restricting the number of awards to an individual, and also proposing that the winning painting should be acquired.[29] In the early years, however, the decisions of the Trustees seem generally to have been accepted as sacrosanct, and in 1928 the *SMH* claimed that the *Archibald Prize* had raised standards in portraiture.[30] Four years later a correspondent again suggested that the terms of the Bequest be changed to allow the Trustees to limit the number of occasions on which one artist could receive the award[31] - a suggestion which was not followed up, but which was interesting, since it implied that the Trustees' decisions were indisputable, and that it was the mechanism of the competition which needed to be changed. The uncharacteristic decisions which gave the award to a woman, Nora Heysen, and later to the romantically struggling relief worker, Henry Hanke, generated special interest in the Press and by the public. There were, however, meetings of Sydney artists complaining that Nora Heysen's prize-winning portrait for 1938 was outside the scope of the bequest.[32]

Critical comment by modernist painters does not seem to have been strong until the award of the 1943 prize. From a field of almost 150 entries, the Trustees awarded the prize to William Dobell for his portrait of fellow artist and friend Joshua Smith. In doing so, as "Jacques" in the *Sydney Morning Herald* pointed out, they broke away from previous standards and the convention that a portrait should be an accurate piece of craftsmanship.[33] Instead, and quite courageously, they rewarded an original composition which relied on exaggeration and skilful use of light to convey the artist's conception of the sitter. A few days later the *SMH* noted that the Trustees had themselves to thank for the shock created by their decision, because they had done little to support the contemporary school.[34] Vigorous argument quickly erupted about the intentions of the prize, the nature of portraiture and the Trustees as judges. In its columns, the *Bulletin* informed its defunct founder that the prize had been awarded to a painting "that looks like a seasick skeleton".[35] More positively, it later suggested that the views of the benefactor should be respected (noting that Archibald had commissioned the traditionalist Longstaff to paint his own portrait),

and argued that the *Archibald Prize* should set the standard of portraiture for the country, and that it would be unfortunate if genuine portraitists decided to abandon it to caricaturists or nonentities.[36]

A climax was reached when two artists who had competed unsuccessfully for the prize brought a legal action against the Trustees on the grounds that the painting was a caricature rather than a portrait, and hence was not eligible to win. The proceedings, including evidence from Dobell himself and from other artists, critics and curators about the nature of portraiture, were fully reported in the press, so that the public was well informed of the arguments which had been presented. Dobell's counsel spoke of the "spite and jealousy " shown by the plaintiffs, and said that the initiation of the proceedings was a disgrace to Australian sportsmanship, a statement on which the judge was moved to comment that it did not help the legal argument.[37]

The Decision of the Court stated that the painting was indeed a portrait within the meaning of the word in Archibald's Will, because it was a pictorial representation of a person painted by an artist and with a degree of likeness, and that the Trustees therefore were not mistaken in admitting it to the competition. The Judge considered that it was outside his terms of reference to decide whether it was a good or bad portrait, and the Trustees' decision therefore stood.[38] The Decision made no contribution to the artistic argument, because it simply reinforced the position of the Trustees as judges. It did, however, draw attention to some of the implications of competition in art, including the fact that judges may operate without stated guidelines, that their position is virtually unassailable, and that the works entered are open to assessment by viewers as well as by the judges. In addition, the Decision created tremendous public interest in the painting. Attendances during February 1944, when it was on display, were over 84,500, as against 28,000 in the previous month. In February 1945, when the prize for 1944, which was won by Joshua Smith, was exhibited, they had dropped back to 26,000.[39] Smith had been a regular entrant in the *Archibald Prize* since 1924, and continued to enter, but this was the only occasion on which he won. He regarded it, perhaps with some justification, as a consolation prize.40

Having in a sense compensated Smith for the humiliation which he might have suffered in 1944, the Trustees saw the prize through to the

end of the 1940s by reverting to the safe course of making four awards to Dargie in the next six years. There were two interruptions to this sequence. The first was in 1948, when the prize again went to Dobell for a lively and voluptuous portrait of Margaret Olley, which was visually the antithesis of his presentation of Joshua Smith, and which again created great public interest. The other was in 1949, when it went to the Modernist Arthur Murch.

A significant outcome of the Dobell/Smith award for 1943 and its consequences was that, although there had previously been some criticism of the decisions of the Trustees, mainly from artists, both the public and the Press now felt justified in adopting a critical attitude to the *Archibald* exhibitions. The public continued to visit them annually and to exercise their own judgement. As a contemporary critic noted, the exhibition of the *Archibald* entries was a good free show.[41] The Gallery, as a proxy sponsor, profited by this interest. Archibald, the original sponsor, would no doubt have approved of both the controversy and the interest generated by it. It is ironic, however, that, because the prize was not acquisitive, it yielded no tangible result for the Galley in the form of the nucleus of a national portrait collection, and that Dobell's controversial portrait of Joshua Smith was in fact accidentally destroyed while in private hands.

Another competition initiated by private individuals but administered by the Gallery was the *Sir John Sulman Prize.* It was established in 1935 by the family of Sir John Sulman, an architect who had been President of the Trustees for sixteen years. Almost inevitably it was based in the AGNSW. The prize of £80 was to be awarded for subject or genre painting or for a mural decoration or design, and it was thus designed to complement the other prizes offered by the Gallery, and also to reflect Sulman's own interests. The winner, however, was to be selected by someone other than a Trustee, but who was to be nominated by the Trustees. Occasional difficulties with interpretation, administration and standards were referred to the Trustees by the judges. For example, in 1938 no work was considered worthy of the award.[42] The number of entries was usually quite small.

The AGNSW and its Trustees were clearly more successful than the other state galleries in attracting and administering donated competitive art prizes which in turn attracted public attention. The few

cases which occurred during this phase included the Art Gallery of South Australia, where an individual was responsible for offering the first prize. Alexander Melrose, Chairman of the Gallery's Trustees, personally presented prizes intermittently from 1921 onwards, and these were continued after his death in 1949 as a memorial to him. The first winner was Russell Drysdale, in one of the few competitions which he seems to have entered.[43] In Brisbane, the QAG ran competitions based on a bequest by the widow of the artist Godfrey Rivers, which was intended to provide a prize to commemorate him.[44]

The AGWA, under the direction of curator R. R. Campbell, was the first of the "national" galleries to initiate and stage a competition purely with the intention of providing encouragement to contemporary artists. The *Perth Prize* was begun in 1948, before the Gallery had separated from the Public Library and Museum, as a competition for painting, presumably with the idea of acquisition, but clearly also as a way of attracting work from other states. For example, in 1951 there were 157 entries from all states.[45] Like the other State galleries, the AGWA did not administer sales, but it was willing to provide information to prospective buyers.

Because the major public galleries in each State capital are supported by government legislation and funding, they are accepted as the authoritative art institutions in each State, and this status has tended to be conferred on the activities with which they are associated, including the competitions which they administer. In the case of the AGNSW, the *Wynne Prize* seems to have occupied a neutral position, and to have been administered as an extension of the Gallery's purchasing policy, reinforcing a conservative conception of expertise in landscape painting. It received little publicity, and seems not to have been influential, except that recurring winners came to be accepted as important career artists, as they were also to be in the case of the *Archibald Prize*.

The *Archibald Prize*, when it began, was largely concerned with traditional professional portraiture, and it perpetuated this conception, with some brief variations. Dobell's shock win in the 1943 prize precipitated several developments. The fact that a group of artists could take legal action against another artist on a technical matter as a result of the competition pre-supposed that technical expertise could

be defined and assessed. The unsuccessful court challenge made it plain that it had to be accepted that different schools of thought existed among artists and art experts. It therefore had the effect of helping to establish the artist as an independent and professional creative worker, and the art object as an expression of the artist's individuality and skills. In effect, it went further, because the publicity associated with the award and its aftermath showed that artists, and winning artists in particular, could attract public attention, and could therefore be potentially useful commercially. It also showed that, because there were no objective rules for excellence, the viewer was entitled to have a personal opinion, a fact which was emphasised by the erratic decisions of the Trustees after 1944. Members of the public, who had originally been impressed by solemn portraits of distinguished persons, now found interest in a variety of personalities and styles, and they have since then taken full advantage of the annual opportunity to make their own judgements. At the opening of the *Archibald* rejects show in 1947, Mr H. P. Woodward, MLA, was bold enough to say "Artists are not made by judges, they are made by public approval.[46]

The Dobell case was responsible for a more questioning attitude on the part of the press to the decisions of the judges, and also a more critical evaluation of entries. Another innovation which contributed to the idea of the professionalism of the artist was that during this period art critics such as Bernard Smith and Paul Haefliger began to use the exhibitions associated with major prizes as opportunities for critical comparative discussion of the work of various painters in the newly begun *Meanjin* and other specialist journals.[47]

In Perth, the Gallery's pioneering effort to draw attention to contemporary art through competition was a more direct attempt to establish the professional profile of the contemporary artist, as the *Melrose Prize* was, perhaps less directly, in Adelaide, and also to educate the public about contemporary art.

The involvement of major art institutions in running art competitions automatically created an impression of expertise being applied to a significant activity, and it is probably not an exaggeration to claim that, since the status of the competition had been established in this way, it reflected the professional status of the competitors. The professional image of the winners was obviously enhanced by their

success, and it is probably the case that for repetitive winners, at least during this phase, although decreasingly later, there was a progressively stronger impression of successful artistic expertise. Certainly, in the case of the *Wynne* and *Archibald* prizes, the careers of some artists such as Heysen and McCubbin were established by their multiple wins, and frustration for emerging artists must have been based on the fact that they also wanted to be recognised as artists who had arrived, even if only through winning a prize.

All competitions, of course, tended to focus interest on the art object, and to do so in the context of the amount of the prize offered. The Dobell case was especially significant in relation to the status of the art object, since it attracted critical interest in the painting, and since portraiture, with its elements of likeness and also portrayal of personality would probably have been a genre in which it appeared relatively easy to assess the acceptability of the image.

For the individual sponsors of competitions which were administered by galleries, their generosity brought posthumous and lasting prestige. For the general public, and especially in the AGNSW, competitions provided a community event which took place in the rarefied atmosphere of an art gallery, but which they could appreciate and assess without special expertise.

Competitions held in other public art galleries and by local government bodies

An important development in the 1920s was the staging of acquisitive competitions by two kinds of government organisations other than the State public galleries, namely, other provincial and suburban public galleries, and local government authorities. The Local Government Acts of the States generally include some provision for the encouragement of cultural pursuits as an optional function, as distinct from the mandatory function of the "national" galleries to support and disseminate art within their area of responsibility. For example, the *NSW Local Government Act* of 1919 specifically allows councils to provide, control and manage art galleries, and to do the same for other places of public entertainment or improvement,[48] and the corresponding acts of other states all mention cultural services along with the more immediate demands of water, sewerage and drainage and

provision of cemeteries. The holding of art competitions by provincial art galleries is consistent with this cultural services function.

The first provincial gallery to hold an art competition was in Victoria, and it was the result of one of a number of endowments made by George Crouch in the 1920s from the estate of his father, Colonel Richard Crouch, to benefit his native city of Ballarat. The gift provided a generous prize of £100. The donor imposed no constraints on the competition, which was open to all Australian residents. The acquisitions which it provided were regarded as of "incalculable value" to the Gallery's collections. In 1939, for example, the Gallery was able to acquire only one other work.[49] A water-colour prize, also acquisitive, was later established at the Gallery, in memory of Minnie Crouch.

Several other public art galleries in Victoria followed suit by beginning art competitions with acquisition as the motive. Those concerned, in Geelong, Bendigo and Castlemaine, were all run rather precariously on public subscription and managed by local committees. In 1938, the Management Committee of the Geelong Art Gallery decided to hold a competitive *Centenary Art Exhibition.*[50] The Gallery had appointed its first Director in that year, and it seems likely that he conceived the idea of the competition, which was highly successful, especially in attracting competitors from several States. In the following year it was confirmed as an annual affair, with two acquisitive prizes named for benefactors, and financed by public subscription. These were later replaced by sponsored prizes. The Castlemaine and Bendigo Galleries followed this example with acquisitive prizes, also in 1938. The latter attracted almost eighty entries in its first year,[51] and was also renamed each year to honour different benefactors. For each of these galleries this was a way of acquiring contemporary works which would not otherwise have been available to them, as well as of generating public interest in the acquisitions.[52]

In the Sydney suburb of Manly, an art competition was in fact responsible for the development of an art gallery. The competition was organised in 1923 as a community event by the Editor of the *Manly Daily*, and offered a prize of £100. The winning painting by J.R. Jackson was so much admired that the Council responded to a petition to purchase it, thus creating the nucleus of a collection. A community

committee, whose patrons included the Governor of NSW and Dame Nellie Melba, was formed to develop an Art Gallery, which was opened in 1930, as the only municipal art gallery in the State.[53]

In NSW, 1947 was a developmental year for art competitions sponsored by local government bodies. Two competitions with differing origins were to be prototypes for a number of others. The first, by a narrow margin, was the *Albury Art Prize*, in which the City Council played a secondary role until the Prize had become an established fact. The idea of an annual art prize had been put to the Council by the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts. Albury Council agreed to contribute to the costs of a competition and to provide a hall, and it nominated representatives for the community Committee which actually organised the competition and arranged for local business firms to sponsor sections of it. The competition was judged by Daryl Lindsay, Director of the NGV, and the Albury Council received the winning works.[54] The works entered were available for sale.

The other pioneering competition was the *Mosman Art Prize*, which was begun and maintained by the Mosman Municipality. The Mosman Council was interested in promoting cultural activities. It was one of the first to establish a library, and certainly the first to contemplate running an annual art competition. The competition originated from a suggestion by the Mayor that the Council should purchase objects of historical and artistic interest, an idea which was transformed into one of holding an art competition by Alan Gamble, a Councillor who had some curatorial experience, and, as an amateur artist, was aware of the difficulties faced by artists in having their work exhibited.[55] The Council provided £100 for prizes in an acquisitive competition, and the 1947 competition attracted fifty-one entries. Purchases by the public were encouraged. The SMH art critic was, however, not enthusiastic about the scheme, because in his opinion smaller art competitions rarely attracted the best painters.[56] The first years were relatively uncontroversial, but over time a proportion of the Councillors became critical of "modern" paintings among the entries, and experimented with various ways of disposing of this problem. The competitions continued, however, and the works which were acquired continued to be crowded into the Council Chambers and Library. Unlike the Wynne and Archibald winners, they did not include multiple wins by one artist, and they therefore present a survey of one aspect of painting over

the period. The Council finally opened a gallery to accommodate and exhibit this idiosyncratic, but historically interesting, accumulation in 1998. The prize continues, with a main award of $10,000 currently attracting further acquisitions.[57]

The primary message given by sponsorships of this type was that art was a benefit to the community, and that competitions provided it by attracting artists to compete, and by staging exhibitions, and also, and more tangibly, by acquiring some art objects. Competitions also offered opportunities to artists. Sponsors were thus performing an important social role. Attention centred on the art objects which were acquired although their quality was, of course, assessed in relation to the artists who had created them. These competitions were important in providing an opportunity for the work of local artists not only to be seen, but to be seen in relation to work of other competitors, and hence for them to be recognised as part of a group with special expertise. Announcements of the results often became social occasions at which the general public were welcome, and which provided an opportunity to bring art objects to the attention of people who might not otherwise have made the effort to see them. It seems likely that most of these institutions were involved with sales of paintings, as Mosman and Albury organisers certainly were.

Competitions sponsored by individuals

Traditionally, individuals have been patrons of art. For some individuals, a 20th century development has been that their patronage has become an indirect arrangement, which takes the form of sponsoring art competitions rather than directly supporting individual artists and purchasing their work. This scheme allows the sponsor to avoid being involved with the trauma of the actual choice of beneficiary, but to receive the credit for giving the award. One manifestation of this form of patronage is, of course, the bequest, some of the complex implications of which are illustrated by the *Archibald, Wynne* and *Sulman* prizes, the early stages of which have been discussed. During this phase of competitions, there were a few other individuals whose patronage took the form of sponsorship of competitions. For example, Mr A. O. Barrett, who was described as a well-known collector, offered prizes at the *Melbourne Centenary Art Exhibition* in 1934. At £200 for a landscape or seascape in oils and £50 for a watercolour, these were generous prizes.[58]

A more consistently influential sponsor, however, was Claude Hotchin, a successful Perth businessman. He was a practical patron, who established his own commercial gallery with the aim of supporting Australian artists, and made many purchases from the works exhibited. A highlight of the program of the gallery was the *Claude Hotchin Art Prize* for Western Australian artists, which was offered annually from 1948 (the same year as the first *Perth Prize*) to 1972. Its aim was to give Western Australian artists an opportunity to compete with each other,[59] and it was judged by Hotchin himself, with the help of a panel. The prize was acquisitive, and from 1948 onwards the works which were acquired and/or purchased, often with a particular collection in mind, were distributed, at times by Hotchin in person, to art collections in country centres and hospitals.[60] In a number of cases, these works formed the nucleus of a regional collection, and eventually, as in Bunbury, led to the establishment of a gallery. He also donated works to State public buildings, hospitals and educational institutions.[61] It seems that over time the exhibitions were increasingly taken over by amateurs. Hotchin trusted his own judgement, however, rather than that of experts, and the fact that his choices were idiosyncratic and variable in quality was offset by the success of his initiative in having works of art exhibited in towns and institutions where they would not otherwise have been seen.[62]

Hotchin seems to have been a true patron of art in the sense that he made generous gifts in order to achieve his aim of supporting artists and encouraging public interest by distributing art objects widely, and that he trusted in his own taste in purchases or competitions. Barrett, perhaps equally a connoisseur, but operating at second hand, used contemporary artists to provide a way of marking a special occasion, and at the same time creating some publicity for them. Both were concerned with developing public appreciation of the image of the artist, while at the same time developing their own public image as patron.

Competitions sponsored for commercial purposes

The categories of sponsors discussed above have been concerned with competitions intended primarily to provide support and encouragement to artists and art institutions and collections, although not without some benefit to the sponsors. In general, they are not based on specific

requirements as to subject or format, and they therefore differ from competitions which have traditionally been held to attract designs for a particular art project, particularly in sculpture. The 15th century competition for the bronze doors to the Baptistery at Florence is a historical example. More recent examples are competitions for sculpture for the House of Parliament in Melbourne in 1887, and a bronze figure group for the National Gallery of Victoria in 1891. Similarly, the design for an Anzac Memorial to be erected at Port Said was chosen through a competition held by the Commonwealth Government in Melbourne in 1923.[63]

During this period, works of art were occasionally commissioned for purposes of commemoration, usually with some notion of illustrating the event commemorated. This process was organised competitively in some cases, such as the competition for a bronze memorial to *The Man with the Donkey*, which in 1935 was sponsored on behalf of the Melbourne community by the readers of the *Argus*, and held under the auspices of the Sculptors' Society.[64]

The requirements of sponsors have been less clear in other cases. For example, during the 1930s a public appeal for a memorial to King George V, to be placed in the Sydney Botanical Gardens, succeeded in raising £6,000. The organisers seem to have had no plans for the memorial, and the project was postponed during World War II. In 1946, an Executive Committee, now eager to spend the money, revived the enterprise by means of a design competition, in which Lyndon Dadswell's concept of a granite monolith decorated with a design representing Aboriginal life was the winner.[65] The project seems to have collapsed, however, not because of doubts as to the appropriateness of the design, but simply because it was discovered that the money had originally been collected specifically for a statue.[66] No memorial was ever built.[67] Other competitions which had a commemorative function included the *Canberra Art Competition* of 1913 (for a landscape painting recording the chosen site) and the *Sydney Sesquicentenary Prize of 1937* (a landscape illustrating a historical event).[68]

The *Australian Art Quest*, organised by the management of the State Theatre in Sydney, represented a new concept, and was certainly not commemorative in intention. In fact, it was a brilliantly

entrepreneurial scheme, conceived as part of the celebrations for the completion of the grand new State Theatre building in 1929. The prize money, totalling £1,000, attracted some 2,500 entries. These were exhibited in the basement before the theatre itself was actually finished, so that the viewing crowds saw not only the paintings but also the splendours of the new building taking shape amongst a forest of ladders and scaffolding. The overall winner was Charles Wheeler, who was later to win the *Archibald Prize* twice.[69] Unlike the commercially sponsored prizes which were mentioned earlier, in the Quest there was no association between the works of art and the event which the competition celebrated - in other words, works of art were being used simply as advance publicity to attract members of the public to visit the theatre.[70] They were presumably available for sale.

There were few other art competitions with such a strongly commercial purpose. Some examples were the *Reeves Prize*, offered in 1936, which indirectly advertised the sponsor's products, and the *Melbourne Herald Best Picture of the Year Award*, in 1937, which, apart from its artistic intentions, would have created some art news for the *Herald*. The *NRMA Competition*, held in 1947, aimed to foster members' love of the outdoors by encouraging them to paint places of interest to motorists. The *Sydney Harbour Bridge Poster Competition* of 1937 was also concerned with advertising.

Developing public relations has been the fundamental purpose of competitions of this type. They were planned to draw on the special artistic and technical skills of artists for projects which were of particular interest to the public. Sponsors stood to benefit from public perceptions of their generosity in offering large prizes to artists, and also from the artistic prestige which artists brought to their projects. They were thus making use of artists in a way which was quite different from the competitions run by the artists themselves and the galleries. Artists who entered the competitions, on the other hand, had to be prepared to accept whatever constraints of subject or format were imposed by the commercial requirements of the project, a position which was probably readily accepted by the general public. Prospective benefits to artists included the likelihood of good publicity, and the possibility of having their work seen by new audiences.

Competitions held to promote ideas

The use of art as a medium for expressing ideas is historical and universal. It exists to a degree in some of the competitions which have already been discussed - for example, in commemorative competitions it was an important part of the artist's task to choose a subject which was appropriate to the event commemorated, without necessarily illustrating it. Employing the device of an art competition to promote an idea was a more subtle strategy. Two competitions which were held respectively at the beginning and end of the first phase of competitions illustrate different approaches to the use of competitions for this purpose. The first of these was the *First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work*, held in 1907, and the second the *Blake Prize*, planning for which began in 1949.

The *Exhibition of Women's Work* was essentially a gesture of patronage. Its inspiration came from Lady Northcote, the wife of the Governor General, who was actively involved in planning it, and who was supported by the "vice-regal ladies" throughout Australia. The Queen was its patroness. Although there was admittedly a general committee of "leading men", most of the organisation was carried out by working committees of women in each State. The intention was to demonstrate and foster the skills of Australian women. The Catalogue spoke of the concept of holding friendly competitions among the women of the whole of Australia to promote closer acquaintance, the interchange of ideas, mutual instruction and esprit de corps, and also to encourage originality. It referred to the advances of women in the applied arts, and to new avenues of employment which were opening up for women.[71]

A preliminary exhibition was held in London for the work of Australian women overseas, and its contents were later sent to Australia for inclusion in the main exhibition. There were preliminary displays in all states, so that the project had a wide influence. Work by some ladies of the Royal family formed a special display, and examples of the work of women in a number of foreign countries were also included. The Exhibition was on the same grand scale as the earlier great colonial exhibitions. It occupied the whole of the Exhibition Building in Melbourne, a crowd of 15,000 people attended in the five weeks during which it was open. It received detailed and enthusiastic coverage in the Press. Although the exhibits included a range of skills

such as china painting, carving, needlework, photography, cooking and horticulture, the various branches of the Fine Arts seem to have been its most important feature. A number of competitive Fine Arts sections offered donated prizes, and there were also some non-competitive sections. Each State sent a group of paintings which had been pre-selected locally, and all were hung.[72] It is impossible to assess the extent to which the Exhibition achieved the high expectations of its organisers, but it was obviously extremely successful in terms of participation and attendances. It was a striking example of disinterested patronage, and of its ability to capitalise in a practical way on the social structure of the early years of Federation.

Some forty years later the *Blake Prize* was conceived as a method of improving the standard of religious art in Australia. Its primary intention was propaganda, rather than selling, acquisition, commemoration or publicising a sponsor, although selling was certainly part of its mission. The idea of the prize was developed in discussions between Father Michael Scott, a Jesuit priest, and Richard Morley, a Jewish lawyer, artist and art dealer. It arose from their dissatisfaction with the state of religious art in Australia, and it reflected their conviction that religious art was still as important as it had been traditionally, that religion should be expressed in art through the work of contemporary artists, and that the standard of religious art must be raised. It was Morley's idea that they should attempt to do this by means of a competition leading to the award of a prize which he would supply. This suggestion was enthusiastically accepted by a committee consisting of members of the clergy, artists and teachers which was formed in 1949.[73]

The award, named the *Blake Prize*, was announced in 1951, and it was presented as part of the Commonwealth Jubilee celebrations, with the prospect of being continued if this was justified by the response.[74] The staging of the prize was dependent on contributions by other sponsors, including the provision of a gallery, and on participation by artists. Both were forthcoming, including a substantial prize of £300. The Prospectus simply specified a religious painting or drawing. The judging, which had to take into account both the artistic and religious qualities of the entries, operated harmoniously, and the first award went to Justin O'Brien for his triptych, *The Virgin enthroned.* The exhibition attracted good attendances and some sales, and the prize

was considered so successful that it was repeated in 1952. It has been offered annually since then.

The purpose of the prize was to sponsor a special category of art. Its motivation was, of course, quite different from that of the *Catholic Centenary Prize* offered in Melbourne in 1948, which although it had religious associations, was actually a way of celebrating an anniversary. Competition was used as a way of involving artists, and of attracting objects of acceptable artistic quality. In adopting the form of competition, the Society respected the art object in its traditional role as a medium of expression, but specified at a general level the message which the object was to express. An important feature of the prize was that it had no association with an art institution. Moreover, the Society's reason for establishing it was not to draw attention to its own philanthropy as a sponsor, but simply to foster a particular type of art, the standard of which, for varying reasons, its members were concerned to improve. The secondary sponsors, and notably the department store of Mark Foys which supplied the gallery and the prize money, were no doubt less altruistic in their expectations, and were likely to have anticipated some kind of public kudos for their generosity to a religious cause. The Society considered that it was offering artists a professional opportunity to exhibit and sell work of a certain type. It, of course, made use of both artists and their work in its exhibition as an important part of its promotion.

The aim of the 1907 exhibition of women's work was not so much to draw attention to and support professional artists as to establish a role for women, and to convince both women artists and the public of their ability to perform it. The aim of the *Blake Prize*, on the other hand, was to develop emphasis on the expression of a particular kind of message, while improving standards in art. Competition was used as a way of introducing this idea, and also of achieving the secondary aim, which was to interest and influence the public.

Observations

This phase of art competitions was essentially a time of development and experimentation. Sponsors unconnected with art were beginning to take on the task of selling works entered in the competition, presumably receiving commissions. Competition was now concerned with the choice of an individual winner, in contrast to the general

grading of individual artists which had been a feature of the great colonial exhibitions. The individual artist who won the prize and the winning art object were automatically prominent in the context of the particular competition, and, for purposes of publicity, in a sense temporarily became the property of the sponsor. The position was, of course, different in the competitions held by the artists themselves, where competition was between colleagues who were judged by their peers.

Reverting to the distinction between patrons and sponsors as defined by Townley and Grayson, it is difficult to find any true patrons among those who were responsible for initiating and staging art competitions, in the sense that they did not stand to benefit from them in some way, even if only in terms of prestige. The ladies who ran the *Australian Exhibition for Women's Work*, however, seem to have qualified. They seem to have been philanthropically motivated, perhaps with some sense of noblesse oblige, but they worked hard and were rewarded with a very visible success. Individual sponsors such as Wynne, Melrose, Crouch and Hotchin might have been relatively disinterested, but even they, and almost certainly Archibald, might have expected to receive at least some kudos from their generosity. In general, other sponsors of competitions were becoming ingenious in working out ways in which art competitions could be used for their particular purposes.

ENDNOTES

1 Stephen Townley & Edward Grayson, *Sponsorship of sports, arts and leisure: law, and business relationships*, Sweet & Maxwell, London, 1984, pp. 4, 13.

2 RQAS *Golden Jubilee Review and Catalogue, 49th Annual Exhibition, 1937.*

3 S of A *Special Exhibition Catalogue* 1929, p. 5.

4 S of A Minutes of General Meeting, 4 Sep. 1935, p. 1.

5 VAS *59th Annual Report for year ending 30 September, 1955.*

6 Juliet Speers, *More than just Gumtrees*, Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors, Melbourne, 1993, p. 69.

7 CAS of Australia *Constitution*, 1944, p. 2.

8 Art Critic, 'Australia at War', *SMH*, 27 Feb. 1946, p. 5.

9 *National Exhibition of Art "Australia at War"* [Catalogue] 1945.

10 Bernard Smith, *Noel Counihan, Artist and Revolutionary*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 204, 205.

11 The Exhibition attracted over 700 entries, 287 of which were exhibited. It was divided into sections which represented theatres of war, and also various media such as front-line sketches and sculpture. There were three prizes in most sections, varying from £55 for first in *The War in the Air* to 5 guineas for fourth in the *Amateur Section.* The prize of £100 for Best Work was donated by the *Melbourne Herald* and won by Noel Counihan, who also won two prizes in the *Industrial Section.* W. E. Pidgeon, who was later to win the *Archibald Prize* twice, won prizes in two sections, and several prizes went to members of the services.

12 McCulloch, 1994, p. 854.

13 AGNSW TM 11 June 1918, 146; ibid. 6 July 1918, 153.

14 Ibid. 15 Oct. 1896, 341.

15 Jack Piggott, *The Wynne Prize*, AGNSW, 1988, p. 10.

16 AGNSW TM, 20 Oct. 1897, 491; ibid. 22 Nov. 1897, 502.

17 ibid. 21 Dec. 1917, 118; ibid. 20 May 1918, 142.

18 ibid. 19 Oct. 1898, 54.

19 AGNSW *Annual Report of the Trustees*, 1944-45, p. 2.

20 D. G., 'Wynne small value, should be promoted', [letter] *SMH*, 23 Aug. 1930, p. 20.

21 Robert Holden 'The Wynne Prize', *Arts National*, vol. 3, issue 2, Nov/Dec. 1985, p. 13.

22 'Sundry Shows, Archibald and Wynne', *Bulletin* 28 Jan. 1948, p. 18.

23 Julian Ashton 'Great Bequest', [letter] *SMH* 19 Jan. 1931, p. 5.

24 AGNSW TM, 19 Jan. 1917, 65.

25 ibid. 26 Sep. 1919, 244 and 248. The relevant clauses of the Will were read at this meeting, at which Archibald's death was announced.

26 Lionel Lindsay, 'The Archibald Prize', *Art in Australia*, 3rd series, no 62, 15 Feb. 1936, p. 67.

27 Sylvia Lawson, *The Archibald Paradox*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1983, p. 241.

28 A. G. Stephens, 'Australian Portrait Painting and the Archibald Prize', *The Pacific*, 15 Feb. 1924, p. 3.

29 'Archibald Prize won by Sir John Longstaff', *SMH*, 30 Jan. 1932, p. 14; F. A. M. 'The Archibald Prize, To the Editor of the Herald', *SMH* 2 Mar. 1938, p. 16.

30 'Archibald Prize won by Mr George Lambert', *SMH*, 14 Jan. 1928, p 18.

31 Pearl Sheldon, 'The Archibald Prize; to the Editor of the Herald', *SMH*, 2 Feb. 1932, p. 5.

32 'Archibald Prize: Complaints about method of award', *SMH*, 11 Mar. 1939, p. 16.

33 "Jacques", 'The Archibald Prize, Art and the average man', *SMH*, 29 Jan. 1944, p. 9.

34 'Archibald Prize's Lessons', [Editorial] *SMH* 2 Feb. 1944, p. 6.

35 'To J. F. Archibald', *Bulletin*, 9 Feb. 1944, p. 7.

36 'Prizes and critics', *Bulletin*, 16 Feb. 1944, p. 2.

37 'Counsel alleges "Spite and jealousy"', *SMH* , 27 Oct. 1944, p. 4.

38 The Attorney General of NSW v The Trustees of the Art Gallery of NSW and William Dobell in the Supreme Court of NSW, *Decision*, Oct. 1944, p. 8.

39 'Gallery Exhibition', *SMH*, 3 Mar. 1945, p. 4.

40 Yve Close, *Joshua Smith, Artist, 1905-1995*. Close, Sydney, 1998.

41 Clive Turnbull, *Art here*, Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1947, p. 33.

42 AGNSW TM, 22 April 1938, 1753.

43 Survey of Art Competitions, 1997.

44 'Art Advisory Committee of the QNG has awarded Godfrey Rivers Prize for picture suitable for the Gallery', *SMH* , 9 July 1935, p. 10.

45 *Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, year ending 30.6.1951.* This Prize was succeeded in 1954 by the *Perth Prize for Contemporary Painting.*

46 'Gallery Trustees criticised at show of rejects', *SMH*, 25 Mar. 1947, p. 4.

47 Paul Haefliger, 'Portraits - Personal & Official', *Meanjin* vol. 5, no. 1, 1946, p. 48.

48 *Local Government Act 1919* (NSW).

49 *Crouch Prize Winners, An exhibition presented by the City of Ballarat Fine Art Gallery*, [Catalogue] 1990. The Prize was accepted with pleasure by the Council of the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery Association, and attracted many entries and much public interest. When the value of the capital decreased, the interest was used for occasional purchases. It was given annually until 1990.

50 Geelong Art Gallery Association Minutes of Meetings, 14 Feb. 1938.

51 'New Gallery, Bendigo Art Project', *Argus*, 19 Dec. 1938, p. 13.

52 In Geelong the original prize was replaced by commercially sponsored prizes in 1965, and in the 1970s the Gallery pioneered sponsorship of a prize for contemporary prints, which later became a purchase exhibition. See Susie Shears, *A Guide to the Geelong Art Gallery and its collections*, Geelong Art Gallery, Geelong, 1989. The *Bendigo Art Prize* continued until 1968. The *Castlemaine Prize* was succeeded in the 1970s by a print prize with local sponsorship.

53 *Official Jubilee Souvenir to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Municipality of Manly 1877-1927.* A *Manly Art Gallery Selection Exhibition* was held irregularly until the 1980s, but the Gallery relied mainly on gifts for its acquisitions.

54 Minutes of Meetings of the Council of the City of Albury, 7 May 1947, p. 9. The administrative arrangements changed over time, and by 1967 it was an Albury Art Gallery Society which ran the Competition and kept the Council informed of its action. Council continued to receive the winning works, and in fact changed the event from an *Open Art Prize Competition* to an *Invitation Purchase Exhibition*, with the idea that the judge would select the painting considered most suitable for the city collection. (Correspondence of the Council, File AE3-3, 8 June 1974.) The Prize was, however, re-instated in 1973, and by 1974 the Council had actively involved itself and appointed a Management Committee, so that the Society lost its initiative in running the competition. (ibid. File AE1, 10 July 1974) The Council provided a permanent gallery, the Albury Art Centre, in 1981.

55 Alan Gamble, *The Mosman Art Prize, an appraisal*, (unpub.) 1998, p 1.

56 Art Critic, 'Mosman Art Exhibition', *SMH*, 8 Oct. 1947, p. 6.

57 In 1955 the Council decided, in a close vote, to ban "modern" art, and, in spite of an appeal from the Society of Artists, contrived to do so by using judges from the conservative RAS, and rejecting consultation with the more progressive CAS. See 'Mosman asked to lift its ban on Modern Art', *SMH*, 16 April 1955, p. 9; 'Mosman Council will keep Modern Art ban', *SMH*, 25 May 1955. In 1983 it instituted separate sections for "traditional" and "non-traditional" paintings, a system which it continued for several years. Critics became less interested in the competition and its controversies as more galleries opened in Sydney.

58 William Moore, 'At home and abroad', *Art in Australia*, 3rd series, no 56, 15 Aug. 1934, p. 30.

59 Murray Mason, 'Award benefits', *West Australian*, 9 Oct. 1971, p. 20.

60 *Sir Claude Hotchin Art Bequests*, National Exhibition Touring Structure for WA, Perth, 1992.

61 Perpetua Hobcroft, 'Claude Hotchin, Artists' champion', *Fremantle Arts Review*, vol. 2, no. 10, Oct 1987, p. 6.

62 Between 1949 and 1967 some thirteen towns received major gifts. Other institutions also received paintings. Over 2,000 were distributed, the Royal Perth Hospital being the major recipient. Hotchin was knighted in 1967, and in 1970 established the Claude Hotchin Art Foundation in the AGWA for the purchase of Australian works of art.

63 It was destroyed during the Suez crisis in 1956. The wreckage was later returned to Australia, and re-erected at Albany in WA. A copy was subsequently erected in Anzac Parade, Canberra.

64 The winner, Wallace Anderson, was selected by a panel of distinguished artists, and began work on the piece while the authorities were still deciding on a site for it. See 'Man with the Donkey, Design for memorial selected by judges', *Argus*, 12 Mar. 1935, p. 2; 'Memorial to man with Donkey', *Argus*, 6 July 1935, p. 23.

65 'Prize design for King George Memorial', *SMH*, 20 Nov. 1946, p. 3.

66 'King George Memorial designs sought', *SMH*, 31 Jan. 1946, p. 5.

67 Press comment in 1946 was concerned more with arguments for spending money on hospital beds than with the actual design.

68 The *Perth Centenary Prize* of 1930, the *South Australian Centennial Prize*, 1936, the *Tasmanian Sesquicentenary Art Prize*, 1954, and the *Queensland Centenary Art Prize*, 1959, had similar intentions.

69 'State Theatre Art Exhibition to be opened to-day', *SMH*, 8 May 1929, p. 17. The competition was more generally known as the *State Theatre Art Quest*. The Judges pronounced the standard of the entries to be as high as those of the annual exhibitions of the professional artists' societies.

70 'Society of Artists Drawings chosen', *SMH*, 23 Apr. 1947, p. 6. The SMH critic dismissed the entries as pedestrian, with the exception of two landscapes by Margaret Olley, which it considered showed "almost uncouth vigour". Idem.

71 *First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work Official Souvenir Catalogue*, Melbourne, 1907.

72 Editorial, 'Women's Work Exhibition, opened by Lady Northcote, a brilliant function', *Argus*, 24 Oct. 1907, pp. 6, 7; 'Splendid attendance', *Argus*, 25 Oct. 1907, p. 5.

73 *The Blake Society for Religious Art*, c1991.

74 *Prospectus, Blake Prize for Religious Art*. 1951.

CHAPTER 3

THE SECOND PHASE OF ART COMPETITIONS

Pioneering sponsorships of art competitions during the first phase of art competitions had established operating conventions, and had shown how competitions could be staged successfully in different situations and for different purposes. The development of competitions during the second phase, which covers the period between the end of the 1940s and the end of the 1970s, was influenced by two significant factors. One was the increasingly structured art market, largely controlled by commercial dealers, which had its own forms of competition. The other was the proliferation of public art institutions, a number of which ran competitions, and which in any case helped to increase public interest in art and respect for it. In this situation, it was logical that there would be a greater emphasis on the commercial aspects of art competitions.

In this chapter I will, as I did for the first phase of competitions in the previous chapter, survey the competitions which were held in relation to the types of sponsors who staged them, and attempt to assess the implications of their doing so. The categories of sponsors who were active during the first phase were represented also in the second, but there were great increases in the number and variety of competitions.

Competitions sponsored by artists

The major metropolitan artists' societies continued to hold competitions, although not as consistently as they had done earlier, probably because of a lack of sponsors who were willing to subsidise them. The RAS of NSW offered a few prizes during the 1950s, primarily to encourage young artists. The VAS began an annual prize in 1954, and seems subsequently to have offered prizes intermittently into the 1960s and 1970s, when they were provided by commercial sponsors.

The CAS in Victoria, NSW and South Australia offered commercially sponsored prizes when sponsors were forthcoming, although not without some reservations. In Victoria, for example, the Society's Council discussed the ethics of money prizes, but concluded that cash was in fact better than a trophy.[1] It obviously accepted that competition between members had some value for public relations

purposes. In its Annual Report for 1965 the Society stated that the next exhibition would not receive the same support from members without a substantial prize, concluding that "Many people must be convinced by mercenary and exciting advertising media such as prizes that large society exhibitions are still of value".[2]

The NSW Branch consistently offered prizes at its exhibitions. In 1962 it welcomed the "magnificent generosity" of clothing manufacturer Roy Taffs, who provided a prize of £500, the largest which had then been offered by an art society. Taffs also gave prizes for the *Young Contemporaries Exhibition* to "encourage youthful adventurousness and a desire to push convictions to their extreme logical conclusion".[3] On occasions the Society used the awards for the education of members by holding meetings at which the judges discussed selected paintings. In the 1970s, however, the *Broadsheet* featured editorial criticism of competitions[4], and the Society ceased holding them at about that time. In SA in the early 1950s the CAS offered the donated *Cornell Prize*, which at £50 was the highest art award in SA, and which continued for some ten years.[5]

The competitions held by the VAS and the NSW Society of Artists were designed to support a traditional view of art, but those held by the CAS in Victoria were initially intended to act as propaganda for a new concept of art. During the 1960s another new national art organisation also used competitions for publicity purposes. This was the Print Council of Australia, which had been established by a small group of enthusiasts, including Dr Ursula Hoff, senior curator of prints at the NGV, and artists of the calibre of John Brack, Fred Williams, Noel Counihan and Jan Senbergs, all of whom were printmakers, as well as patrons such as John Reed, a leading member of the CAS, and founder of the Museum of Modern Art and Design.

Their mission was to revive interest in the print, which they considered was being neglected as an art form. Their strategy included forming a society of patrons of printmaking, and establishing a major annual *Print Prize* as a way of stimulating the interest of both artists and the public. Much of the groundwork was done by a Provisional Committee, and by the time of the first general meeting and the election of a formal committee in 1966 there were 150 members.[6] The Committee lost no time in organising a competition with a donated prize of $400, which

attracted entries from more than ninety artists, sixty-two of which were accepted. The resulting exhibition opened in the NGV in September 1967, and was shown at most of the State Galleries throughout Australia and at some regional galleries, with the aim of creating wider public interest in prints, and awareness of the high standard of the medium in Australia. It was held again in 1968 and 1969, after which it seems to have lapsed because of lack of financial sponsorship.[7] Several members had distinct reservations about the value of competitions, and in particular about attitudes to print prizes, which they considered to be undervalued. The Committee must, however, have considered competition to be worthwhile, because when it received a government grant in 1973, it used part of it to finance a $500 *Print Prize* and also a *Student Printmaker's Award*, selected from twelve art schools in all States.[8] Another competitive project for artist members was that each year they were invited to submit prints, some of which were selected to produce editions from which members and special patrons would receive the print of their choice - a practical method of drawing attention to the work of current printmakers while providing a service to members. It still continues.

The competitions mentioned were run by relatively large societies of artists based in the capital cities. They functioned in the context of an artistic milieu which was supported by the influence of a major public art gallery, and by comment in the press and some specialist journals, and their members included at least a proportion of artists who could be regarded as professionals. As they had done during the first phase, art competitions served several purposes. They provided occasions for the sale of members' work. They functioned as a way of exchanging ideas and, to some extent, of developing standards. They were one of the few effective ways available of attracting public interest, although admittedly with a limited audience. For this reason, competitions were now used by the Print Council for purposes of propaganda, as they had been used earlier, and continued to be, by the CAS. The fact that they were run by major societies had the effect of contributing to perceptions of the professionalism of artists, and the value of their work. While they might have been conscious of the disadvantages of competition between themselves, artists clearly felt that these were outweighed by their potential usefulness.

The Wildlife Art Society of Australia, which was founded in 1974, aims to foster awareness and appreciation of Australia's flora and fauna through art. Its members are not professional artists, although they have a professional approach to their work. The annual exhibitions are an important focus, and the 1988 exhibition, for example, offered fourteen categories of awards, which were judged by panels of experts. Exhibitions have become much more ambitious since 1994, when Myer Stores began providing substantial sponsorship.[9]

As distinct from art competitions based in the capital cities, competitions were organised throughout the country by groups and societies of artists, most of whom had a strong commitment to art without considering themselves to be, or even aspiring to become, professionals. Most of them were based in centres which had no public gallery at the time when the competition was initiated. In these cases, the competition was often the major focus not only for the activities of the society but also for art interests in general in the community.

Probably more than thirty of these art societies which ran competitions were formed between the 1950s and the 1970s, the greater proportion of them in country towns in NSW and Queensland. Some worked in conjunction with other bodies such as the local Council. A few still function, although they have usually weathered major changes, and it is difficult to trace the many which no longer exist. Some from NSW, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia which are still functioning were included in a selective survey of art competitions in Australia which I carried out in 1997.[10] The broad information which it supplied indicated that sales and publicity were the main reasons for the competitions organised by these societies, and that they were often motivated by the personal interest of the organisers. The acquisition of art objects for a gallery or a future gallery was also an incentive. The sponsoring societies had to find their own funding, usually from local businesses which were rewarded by advertising and appreciative publicity. Examples include veterans such as the suburban *Ryde Art Prize* in Sydney, dating from the late 1950s, the country *Berrima District Art Prize* in NSW which, with variations, has continued since 1950, and the *Beaumaris Prize* in Victoria, which began in this suburb in 1953 and still continues. In Tasmania the Burnie Coastal Art Group began a competition in 1979 with a local radio station as sponsor.

Some of these local societies have used competitions developmentally. For example, the Tumut Art Society had its first exhibition in 1957, but in the following year changed it to a competition which formed part of the local festival, and was judged by Hal Missingham, Director of the AGNSW. It has had exhibitions every year since then and the exhibition has become the major cultural event in the town.[11] The Jacaranda Art Society in Grafton first gave its award in 1961. It was supported by the Council, which purchased some entries on the recommendation of the judges.[12] An art society in Campbelltown, NSW, initiated an art prize in 1962, and later, with the support of the Council, associated it with the popular Festival of Fisher's Ghost, which brought it publicity and sponsorships.[13] In Murwillumbah in 1968, a group of painters found sponsors for a prize which they began as a way of attracting publicity, and which still functions as a community project, although it also has links with the Regional Gallery.

In Redcliffe, close to Brisbane, a competition which was to be popular for forty years was originally proposed by the Redcliffe Council, and was begun by a special Art Contest Committee which later became an Art Society consisting of artists most of whom were amateurs. The Council provided £156 for prizes and acquired the winning paintings. The *Redcliffe Art Prize* continued to be awarded annually, and twenty years later the Society had some 300 members, and had received 700 entries for the competition from all States.[14] Artists have been responsible for influential competitions in some of the major provincial cities in Queensland. The *Townsville Art Prize* was begun in 1967 by the local art society in conjunction with the City Council, with the intention of showcasing local art. It is acquisitive, and the Perc Tucker Gallery where it is now based, receives the works which are acquired. It later became the *Pacific Festival Art Exhibition* and most recently the *Townsville/Thuringowa Annual Art Awards.*[15] The *Rockhampton Art Competition and Exhibition*, begun in 1970, has been run by the Royal Queensland Art Society and Central Queensland Contemporary Artists to serve artists in the region.[16] The Gladstone District Artists' Club initiated the *Martin Hanson Memorial Art Award*, an acquisitive prize for Queensland artists, in memory of Martin Hanson, its patron, in 1976.[17]

Because they mainly represent amateur artists, these competitions have a different role from that of the "professional" artists' societies, and in particular the specialist societies such as the CAS and the Print Council. Depending on the expertise and attitude of the judges who are used, their standards vary considerably. Their great significance is for the local community in which they are based. They provide mutual support for local artists, and a focus for their activities, and they help to broaden horizons for them and for viewers by attracting some entries from artists from outside the locality. They show the work of artists who would otherwise have little or no chance of having their work exhibited, and they encourage sales in a setting which is not intimidating. They provide a community occasion, and they often have a special significance in the community as the only formal way of stimulating appreciation and purchase of works of art.

Competitions held in state public galleries

The AGWA was the first and most enterprising of the State art galleries in staging art competitions as a way of encouraging interest in contemporary, and particularly local, art. Its annual *Perth Prize* for painting had begun in 1948, and in each year of its existence the Trustees commented on its success in terms of the good response from artists throughout the Commonwealth.[18] In 1954 the Gallery Society, which had been founded by the newly appointed Director, Laurie Thomas, began a *Perth Prize for Contemporary Painting*, which re-emphasised the interest in contemporary art. It was supported by private and business benefactors and offered a non-acquisitive prize of one hundred guineas. The Society had an option on purchases, and most of the exhibits were available for sale.[19] There were good numbers of entries, a significant proportion of which were from other States, so that the exhibition, which was held in the Gallery, presented quite a representative collection of contemporary Australian art. It also fostered the idea of buying it. Similar competitions were held annually for ten years.

In 1965 the organisers took what the judge, art historian and curator, Dr Ursula Hoff, described as a courageous decision to convert the prize into one for drawing.[20] There were two main reasons for the change - that the prize for painting was becoming less attractive, and that drawing as an art form was often overlooked. Like its predecessors, the prize drew entries from all States, and some purchases from them were

added to the Gallery's collection. Continuing controversy over the definition of drawing and over perceived obscenity in some of the entries provided an interest and a challenge for viewers. The *Prize for Drawing* continued until 1968, and in 1970 was replaced with an *International Prize for Drawing* offering a prize of $1,000, which in its last year rose to $3,500. It was successful in attracting overseas entrants, and some judges were brought from overseas. It ended in 1975, largely because of a growing number of other competitions for drawing. In 1977 an *International Survey of Drawing* was held. The Gallery Society, as overall sponsor, and no doubt acting with the encouragement of the Director of the Gallery, was successful in finding local sponsors.[21] The prize had established the Gallery as an innovative specialist centre for drawing, and had made local artists and viewers aware of the singularity of drawing.

The AGNSW continued to be a willing administrator of competitions resulting from benefactions by private individuals, and most of the new benefactions during this phase applied to media or purposes which were not already included in the competitions which it administered. The *Robert Le Gay Brereton Memorial Prize* was established by Brereton's family to commemorate him, and to promote the study of draughtsmanship. It still continues, the initial prize of £75 having been increased by the Gallery over time.[22] In the 1950s the artist Elioth Gruner made a bequest to be used for a competition for the best study of landscape by a NSW student, and this was received in 1966. A report to the Trustees on the 1974 awards was that ten entries had been received and that the standard was not high.[23] A bequest from Miss Bessie Pring to commemorate her parents was used to provide an annual prize for the best watercolour landscape by a woman, an award which began in 1966 and which complements the Wynne exhibition.[24] Another memorial bequest was the *John McCaughey Prize*, a relatively simple one to administer because it was for the best picture by an Australian artist which had been hung in the Gallery during the year.[25] The Trustees also accepted a bequest by Miss Diana Dyason which was designed to provide support for art students while overseas on travelling scholarships. This was not, like the *Travelling Scholarship*, based on a competition, but was administered relatively informally in response to requests received, and it was tactful of the Trustees to agree that care should be taken to ensure that help given to artists from the *Dyason Bequest* should not be used to finance the prestige reaped by the *Rubinstein Scholarship*.[26] In 1962 the Trustees themselves offered a

separate watercolour prize to supplement the Wynne Prize and to give greater recognition to watercolour.

For the Board of Trustees of the AGNSW, as pseudo-sponsors of the *Wynne* and *Archibald* Prizes, the coming into force of the new Art Gallery of NSW Act of 1958 was something of a challenge.[27] It liberalised the way in which they were selected, and it also limited their tenure. There were significant changes in membership. The numbers of entries for the *Wynne Prize* were usually high - over 400 in 1967 and 1977, and there were usually well over 200 for the Archibald. The Trustees in their role as judges continued to be concerned with selection procedure for the *Archibald Prize*, but reverted to their preferences for conventional portraitists. There were recurring awards to painters such as William Dargie, Ivor Hele and Walter Pidgeon, and to the less conventional Clifton Pugh. Judy Cassab, only the second woman to win the *Archibald Prize*, actually did so twice. By the late 1960s, however, there were some more adventurous choices of winners, including Jon Molvig, Janet Dawson and Brett Whiteley. The prize was losing its value appreciably, and in 1976 it was supplemented from Trustees' funds in order to maintain the number and variety of entries.[27] The Trustees now had a somewhat proprietorial attitude to both the Wynne and Archibald prizes, especially in relation to judging. The Sulman Prize seems to have raised some difficulties in defining admissible entries, but not with judging. The entries for the three prizes were now exhibited together, providing the Gallery with a popular and potentially controversial exhibition, as well, of course, as involving it in considerable expense and effort.

The Trustees of the Queensland Art Gallery initiated two acquisitive prizes in the 1950s. One of these honoured H. C. Richards, a former Chairman. It was subsequently changed into a *Trustees' Prize*, which was used each year to honour a person who had contributed to the advancement of art in Queensland. The other, the *L. J. Harvey Memorial Prize for Drawing*, was presented biennially in association with the Half Dozen Group of Artists and continued into the 1980s. The Gallery also administered the *Andrew and Lilian Pedersen Memorial Prizes Fund*. Lilian Pedersen had been an active member of the Half Dozen Group of artists, and was honoured by the Gallery for her services to art. In 1975 she gave the Gallery an endowment of $18,000, to be used for prizes for printmaking, small sculpture, and drawing, which were awarded at different intervals, a gift which reflected both

her own artistic work and her confidence in the Gallery's ability to administer awards in these areas. The first prize was offered three years later, and the competitions continued after Mrs Pedersen's death in 1983. [29]

During this phase, the NGV was not much involved with sponsorships, but in 1956 the Gallery Society accepted responsibility for the *John McCaughey Memorial Art Prize*, a bequest from McCaughey's daughter, based on conditions which were open to a variety of interpretations and have been the cause of recurring controversy. The *Prize*, originally for £200, now offers $30,000. Because it is acquisitive and entries are by invitation it provides the Gallery with an opportunity for selective acquisition.[30] The Gallery Society also offered an annual prize for drawing in the 1960s. Like the NGV, the AGSA has had little involvement with sponsorship of competitions. In 1950, however, it received a bequest from the estate of painter Maude Vizard-Wholohan to be used for a prize for the encouragement of the Fine Arts, and in particular for an annual painting prize on a given subject, and, if possible, for prints and sculpture, with the condition that all prize-winning works were to be given to the Gallery. The Gallery delegated the management of the prize to the RSASA, which offered it annually from 1957, and biennially from 1970. In 1975 the Gallery again took over control, perhaps because it was dissatisfied with the acquisitions it was receiving, and also because of criticism of the way in which the awards concentrated on unfashionable categories of art. It proceeded, again in the context of local criticism, to convert the prize into a purchase award for invited artists, and subsequently used it as the basis for a survey of South Australian contemporary painting.[31]

The AGNSW's increasingly varied portfolio of art competitions was the result of benefactions offered rather than of initiation by the Gallery itself, and the Trustees seem to have added to it with confidence in their own administration, and with the idea that competitions were good for attendances, but without serious consideration of their implications for artists. In 1957, however, quite early in the second phase of competitions, the National Gallery Society of NSW, a group of supporters of the Gallery, staged a debate questioning the value of competitions and prizes. The audience consisted of artists and members of municipal councils which ran art competitions, and participants included Dr Felix Arnott, an influential member of the

Blake Society, and Tony Tuckson, Deputy Director of the Gallery. The principal speaker was the artist Margot Lewers, a prominent member of the CAS, who was herself later to win several prizes. She argued that competitions could cause false values, and could be discouraging to young artists whose work was not hung. She warned also that there was a tendency for painters to paint specifically for prizes, and to become professional prize winners.[32] Unfortunately, the conclusions of the meeting do not seem to have been reported, but these cautionary comments are interesting as an indication of the thinking which had prompted the meeting.

Observations

The *Archibald Prize*, and to a lesser extent the *Wynne Prize*, were now attracting more critical press comment. Much of this related to the recurring awards given to painters of conventional pictures, and also to the fact that a number of entries were not exhibited. The method of selection used by the Trustees, who, of course acted as judges, was also criticised.[33] There were some more far-reaching comments in the literary journals, about portraiture in particular. The critic, Robert Hughes, discussing the nature of portraiture, claimed that it was ten years since the *Archibald* had been won by a work of art, 34 and repeated this view in 1960 when he alleged that, out of 217 entries, about twenty were works of art. Alan McCulloch contended that the chief difficulty with the *Archibald* was the lack of vitality in the works entered, and that this was compounded by the confidence of the judges in their collective taste as a test of quality. He also made a plea for painting, rather than merely likeness, to be valued.[35] In 1971 the painter David Rankin characterised the *Archibald Prize* as a stamping ground for outmoded ideas about art and competitions, adding that virtually no progressive contemporary artist paints portraits.[36] Painter and art reviewer Bernard Boles, on the other hand, discussed the constraints which were imposed on artists by the possible shame of not being hung.[37] These comments are not necessarily representative, but they illustrate the part played by the *Archibald Prize* in the development of critical attitudes which were concerned with the status of the artist.

The position of the AGNSW in relation to the *Archibald Prize* during this period demonstrates some interesting aspects of a competition based on the genre of portraiture. A large number of artists entered the competition, whether or not they were portraitists, having been

attracted by the prospect of a large prize. The judgements of the Trustees made some gestures towards new styles and so opened up new ideas, although without apparent consistency. Criticism favoured the professionalism of the artists, because it generally had to centre on the painting rather than the likeness. A strong tradition of public interest in entries for the prize developed, probably more because they were portraits than because of their qualities as paintings. This interest contributed to the public image of the AGNSW, and to understanding by the public that art could have human interest.

The unique position of the "national" galleries inevitably made them influential, and their attitude to competitions is therefore significant. The initiatives taken by the AGWA in staging competitions show its concern to support contemporary local artists at a professional level, not only by offering the encouragement of an award for painting, but by adding the stimulus of an award for drawing, and exhibiting the work of local artists in the context of work of artists from overseas. In doing so, it was carrying out its educational function by presenting to the public the skills and ideas of the artists in an area which was not generally of popular interest. The QAG was the only other State public gallery to initiate competitions. It may be unjust to suggest that the prizes which it offered seem to have been intended primarily to honour the benefactors, and secondarily to encourage local artists, but it is certainly true that the *L. J. Harvey* and the *Pedersen Prizes* provided practical benefits for local artists in particular, and contributed to public appreciation of works of art.

In the AGNSW, the staff of the Gallery, as distinct from the Trustees, seem to have envisaged competitions as a way of providing support for artists at a level which recognised their special abilities. Hal Missingham, the energetic Director of the Gallery, who had been appointed in 1945, was consulted by most of the local government authorities in NSW (and by some other organisations such as the Royal Agricultural Society), about establishing and running art competitions. He began the practice of regularly issuing lists of forthcoming competitions for the information of artists. He acted as judge for a large number of competitions, believing that the awards and associated press publicity made the position of the artist in the community much easier and more highly regarded. He was particularly

involved with the *NSW Travelling Art Scholarship* and with the *Helena Rubinstein Travelling Scholarship.*[38]

For both the NGV and the AGSA, the administration of the few competitions for which they are responsible seems to have been regarded primarily as a source of acquisitions. A comment made by Daniel Thomas to the Art Galleries Association in discussing patronage of the visual arts in Australia seems to be relevant to their experience. He noted that prizes can be offered for subject or technical categories of art which are almost defunct.[39]

Competitions held in provincial public art galleries

During the first phase of competitions, some galleries in country towns had actively used them as a way of attracting interest and acquisitions, especially at a time when acquisition funds were scarce. This example was not lost on others, particularly in NSW, Queensland and Victoria, during the second phase. A number of galleries and local government authorities held art competitions as a way of developing collections and also specialisations within collections. The enterprise of Albury in establishing a competition in the 1940s, and later a gallery, has already been mentioned. A number of other NSW country towns in important centres such as Bathurst, Lismore, Newcastle, Wollongong and Wagga Wagga began competitions soon afterwards in the 1950s, and I will comment briefly on aspects of some of these.

The City of Broken Hill may appear to be in a special situation as regards cultural activities because of its remoteness, but its art gallery was established in 1904, and since 1970 has been funded by the City Council. The Council began sponsoring an acquisitive annual competition for local artists in 1953, and in 1977 this was extended into an open award with a prize of $1,500.[40]

In Bathurst in 1955 a group of citizens inaugurated the *Carillon City Festival Art Prize*, described by its President as "giving a vigorous lead in fostering Art for the benefit of our own people here.... and also publicising Bathurst throughout the Commonwealth".[41] The community raised £100 as an acquisitive prize for an oil painting, and there were some other prizes. By 1958 the City Council had taken over responsibility for supporting the prize. Soon afterwards the growing collection was housed in an art gallery in the new Civic Centre. In

1990 it moved to a purpose-built gallery. It had concentrated on ceramics, but later added sculpture and the print, and in 1983 it became the *Bathurst Art Purchase* with funds to spend on specialisations such as the *Lloyd Rees Collection* and the *Arts of Hill End.*[42] The success of the community-run prize had clearly encouraged the Council to become involved. The *Newcastle Region Art Gallery Prize*, by contrast, was initiated to celebrate the opening of an art gallery which had been established to meet the conditions attached to the presentation of a valuable collection to the Council. It attracted good numbers of entries, including some from artists who were becoming well known, and in 1967, its tenth anniversary year, offered two acquisitive awards, with total prize money of $1,300.[43]

Tamworth and Wagga Wagga both used art competitions as a way of developing specialisations. The *Tamworth Art Society and Art Gallery Prize*, based in the Gallery, had been offered since 1960, with some stimulus from a special *Bicentenary Prize.* In 1970 it offered an acquisitive section for works in fibre, which during the 1980s became the *Tamworth National Fibre Exhibition*, items from which were selected for purchase by the Gallery. In Wagga Wagga the Art Society had administered prizes donated by the Council and other donors from the 1950s onwards, and the City Art Gallery was opened in 1964. In 1975 these prizes were converted into purchase awards by invitation, making it possible for the Gallery to tailor its acquisitions to its specific needs. In 1981 the Gallery developed a specialisation by replacing the purchase awards with a *Contemporary Glass Exhibition*, and acquiring the winning pieces as the foundation of its important collection of contemporary glass.

In Queensland, sponsored gallery based competitions do not seem to have appeared until the 1960s and 1970s in towns such as Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Surfers Paradise.[44] A branch of the QAG was opened in Rockhampton in the late 1960s, and it began a collection of Australian art. By 1970 it was using part of its Art Acquisition Fund for an acquisitive prize for paintings by artists in the region, demonstrating the Gallery's support for local artists.[45] Townsville was later in establishing a gallery, and when its Perc Tucker Gallery was finally established in 1981 on the initiative of the Townsville Art Society, it was on the unusually independent basis of being administered by an incorporated association. The Art Society, however,

had begun the *Townsville Art Prize* back in 1967 to acquire works for a future gallery, and to showcase the work of North Queensland artists.[46]

The Gold Coast Gallery is also a regional gallery. The acquisitions received from the *Gold Coast City Art Prize*, which was first awarded in 1968, were instrumental in justifying the need for a gallery, and, since it was built in 1986, the Gallery has taken over the running of the *Prize*. The idea of a large art prize to rival, and preferably outshine, the *Archibald* and *Blake* prizes, was conceived by the City Council and the Tourist Association of the Gold Coast. In what was essentially a pioneering phase of the development of the area it was seen as a potential source of prestige and a useful tourist attraction. In practical terms it was regarded as a business venture in which the Council, the Association and local businesses who contributed to sponsorship were entrepreneurs, while artists supplied the stock in trade. In addition to its public relations value, the practical benefits which were anticipated were acquisitions, sales commissions and tax benefits.[47] The Council at first turned to the QAG for advice on the competition, but it soon delegated control of it to a new Gold Coast Acquisition Society, a body which represented the conflicting interests of the Council, the Gold Coast Tourist Association and local artists.

The first award of the prize in 1968 was judged by Eric Westbrook, Director of the NGV. In view of a latent plan to develop a collection for a future gallery, he persuaded the authorities to convert the prize into a purchase award.[48] Subsequent awards have operated on this basis, so that judges now have the responsibility of assessing entries not only as individual works, but in relation to the direction which they might give to a growing collection. The style of the entries selected has been a recurring cause of bitter argument. Ironically, in a city aiming to be the epitome of modernity, both the majority of the Council and the public favoured paintings in conventional realist style. The expert judges and the artist members of the Society, on the other hand, were determined to support contemporary developments in art. Internal and public controversy over decisions was therefore inevitable and constant. Its publicity value was, however, recognised with some cynicism by the Council, which welcomed occasional newsworthy controversy.[49] A Gold Coast City Art Gallery was finally established as part of a new Gold Coast Art Centre in 1986. In 1990 the funding base changed,

probably because the actual presence of an art gallery was more attractive to sponsors than the future possibility of one, and since then Conrad Jupiter's Casino has provided major sponsorship on a yearly basis, with the support of other sponsors, including a share from the City Council. The award, however, remains based in the Art Gallery, which has the responsibility of finding sponsorships annually, and of arranging the judging, and hence to some extent of shaping its own destiny. The acquisition fund is now $20,000. The award has clearly been significantly influenced by its association with the Gallery, both when the idea of a gallery was only projected and after it was established, and it has supplied the Gallery with works which it would have been unlikely to have acquired otherwise.[50]

It is worth noting at this point that purchase awards, as distinct from prizes, became increasingly popular from the 1970s onwards. They had been used at least in the 1960s, for example, in Bunbury. The principle behind purchase awards generally was that one or more competitors were selected to receive the awards, and that the work or works of art involved were then purchased by the sponsor. The purchase price had usually been nominated by the artists, and on this basis the sponsoring institution could select one or more works within its budget. For the institution the benefit was that it could choose works of an appropriate standard which would complement its existing collection, although it might have to juggle its choice because of financial limitations. For artists, the arrangement offered the possibility of a definite sale, and of having their work included in the collection of an institution which was acceptable to them, although admittedly the choices made could reflect the needs of the institution rather than an assessment of the relative merit of the works of art. This arrangement seems to have been particularly suitable for formats such as prints and drawings, the prices of which were not generally as high as for paintings, so that a number of works could be acquired. The Mornington Peninsula Art Centre offers purchase awards for drawings and paintings in alternative years. The *Gold Coast City Art Prize* seems to be particularly popular with artists in Queensland and NSW, and currently it purchases up to fifteen or sixteen works annually.

Sponsored art competitions were based in several galleries in Victoria between the 1950s and 1970s. Benalla, for example, ran a competitive *Invitation Art Exhibition* from 1970-71 with the idea of acquiring works by established contemporary artists.[51] An acquisitive invitation prize was sponsored in the Hamilton Art Gallery for some 15 years from 1976, and Sale Regional Art Centre ran an acquisitive prize in 1970.

Competitions which were particularly useful in developing collections were based in galleries in Shepparton and Mildura. 1965 was a turning point for the Shepparton Art Gallery. After some years of displaying its small collection in the Town Hall it moved into a specially designed gallery. It also received a bequest providing funds to be used for acquisition of works of art through awards and prizes.[52] A competition offering a prize of $1,000 was held annually for four years, and it resulted in acquisition for the Gallery of several paintings by emerging artists. In the climate of specialisation which was being encouraged by the developing Regional Galleries scheme, the Director then elected to concentrate on ceramics. Some purchases were made, and in 1971 the Gallery, with prize money provided by Caltex Australia, began offering an annual *Caltex Ceramic Award,* with a prize of $400, the richest prize for ceramics in Australia. It purchased the winning works, forming the basis of a study collection. This award operated only until 1975, but the idea of a prize for ceramics was revived in 1991, and the Gallery succeeded in gaining sponsorship from the Sidney Myer Fund for an *Australia Day Award*, which was presented as a national contest.[53] It was in turn replaced in 1997 by an even more ambitious competition, the *Sidney Myer International Ceramics Award* which offered a prize of $15,000. The enterprise of the Gallery in deciding to specialise and in canvassing the different sponsorships represented by these competitions had the result of enabling it to develop a significant collection ranging from tradition-based pottery to studio pottery.[54]

The Shepparton competitions were conceived and carried through by the Gallery itself. Another enterprising gallery-based competition was the *Mildara* (later *Mildura*) *Sculpture Prize*, which was first held in 1961. The Mildura Council had established a gallery in 1956, and in 1961 it instructed the Director to assess the desirability of holding a sculpture competition. He reluctantly recommended holding one for purposes of promotion, although his own view was that art competitions are wrongly based on the assumption that art is something which is

measurable.[55] The choice of sculpture seems to have been inspired by Eric Westbrook's enthusiasm for specialisation by Regional Galleries, and his comment that the Gallery's lawns would be ideal for a display of sculpture. The Gallery played the major role in organising the competition, and there was active community interest in the project, with local firms providing generous sponsorship. Sculptors from all over Victoria and beyond were eager to participate. The competition brought considerable status to the Galley and its collection was strengthened by the acquisition of prize-winning works by some important sculptors. Professor Joseph Burke, Professor of Fine Arts at Melbourne University congratulated the Gallery on "launching a competition which future students of Australian art may well regard as something of a landmark in its history".[56] The next two triennial Prizes followed a similar pattern, with enthusiastic sponsorship and large numbers of entries and, in 1967 the newly opened Mildura Arts Centre became available for use as a setting for the exhibition.

There was a fundamental change in 1970. Tom McCullough, the new Director of the Gallery, envisaged a different role for the Gallery and the Triennial, going beyond what might be considered conventional contemporary art. He made a decision to abandon competition and awards, and instead invited sculptors who were chosen for their avant garde work to participate.[57] Purchases were made, and some ephemeral works were subsidised. His idea was taken further in the 1973 Triennial, when most of the works shown were actually outside the Gallery and became part of the landscape, rather than merely being placed in it. Many were ephemeral. This emphasis on experimental work continued in the Triennials which followed. There was considerable interest and some perplexity on the part of the community, and criticism from both it and the Council. The Council attempted to control what it considered to be the moral aspects of some of the entries, but it continued to help with funding, as did other bodies including the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council.

Under a new Director, the eighth Triennial in 1982 was a more conventional affair, with generous sponsorships and Council support. It attracted entries from established sculptors and purchases were made for the Gallery. There was now, however, competition from an Australian Sculpture Triennial organised in Melbourne in 1981 by McCullough.[58] The Mildura Triennials were organised by new Directors

in 1985 and 1988, but the 1988 event was the last. This was probably partly because of diminished support from the Victorian Government, and partly because the competition was now no longer unique. Perhaps also the Council saw less prospect of practical benefits such as tourism and acquisition. The Mildura experience illustrates the differing roles which a gallery can play in relation to art competitions. It can either hold a competition which attracts and rewards work which may be innovative but does not go beyond existing conventions, or, at the other extreme, it can create a non-competitive situation which provides an incentive to artists to come together to experiment with avant garde ideas, with the prospect of some financial support.

Another gallery in Victoria, the Mornington Peninsula Arts Centre, was not established until 1969. It was responsible to the Mornington Shire Council and administered by a Committee of Management, and was quickly designated a Regional Gallery. In 1991, it moved into a purpose-built gallery, and adopted Australian drawings and Australian prints as its major specialisations. Its Director, Alan McCulloch, the veteran organiser of the *Georges Invitation Art Award*, had considerable experience with art competitions, and was well known as an art critic, art historian and art judge. It was therefore not surprising that the Arts Centre adopted art competitions as a major source of acquisitions. Beginning in 1973, these competitions took the form of *Biennial Festivals*, alternating between drawing and the print, formats which were not often featured in competitions at that time. To finance them, the Arts Centre obtained sponsorships from Caltex Oil, from the Flinders and Mornington Shire Councils, and from its own gallery society, enabling organisers to offer a minimum of $2,000 for purchases. Competition operated then, as it still does, at two levels - selection from the total entries of those works which will be exhibited, and selection from these of works to be acquired by purchase for the Permanent Collection. In the final analysis, therefore, the successful artists are those whose work is hung, is considered most appropriate for the collection, and is within the purchasing budget of the Festival. The Festival has provided a wide range of prints and drawings for the Gallery's collection.[59]

The *Fremantle Arts Centre Print Award* in WA is a classic example of a successful symbiosis between a gallery and a commercial sponsor. The Arts Centre opened in 1973, with a Hotchin gift of paintings as its

nucleus. It had an active access program, and Ian Templeman, its Director, saw the possibility of promoting the Centre and building a collection by holding a competition. Discussions with Ron Douglas, the Chairman's Representative for Shell in Western Australia, led to the idea of an annual acquisitive award for printmaking. This proposal had several attractions. There was no major print prize in Australia. Unframed prints were relatively easy to send, so that entries were likely to be received from all over the country. Moreover, a prize would be a great stimulus to printmaking in Western Australia, and was particularly relevant to the workshops which were being run at the Centre.[60] Shell agreed to co-operate in what was to be a most successful partnership. It donated a cash prize of $500. Even more important, it made its offices in all states available as collection depots from which works were freighted to Perth, so that interstate printmakers were encouraged to enter. The numbers of entries from all over the country increased from year to year, and by the 1980s the award had been increased to two acquisitions of $1,000 each. Entries continued to arrive regularly from other states, even when the freight arrangements with Shell were withdrawn, and by the late 1980s and 1990s they usually totalled about 300, from which about seventy were selected for exhibition. Special additional classes such as artists' books, and works by indigenous artists were introduced over time, but were usually held only once, because they were quickly subsumed into the major awards. The award encouraged the use of new technologies, which increasingly made it possible for entrants based in remote areas to enter, as well as those in the major cities.[61] Although its sponsorship is on a year-by-year basis, Shell has continued to be a strong supporter, and now has naming rights. The sponsorship by Shell has produced only one public embarrassment for the Centre, on the occasion when the Premier of Western Australia, Carmen Lawrence, who was to open an exhibition, withdrew in protest against some of the company's activities in Africa.

Another gallery-based competition in WA was the *Bunbury Art Prize*, begun by the Bunbury Art Society a few years before the first public art gallery opened in 1962, having been inspired by an earlier gift of paintings by Claude Hotchin. The prize of £100 was sponsored by the Town Council and local businesses, and attracted a good number of entries from the Bunbury area, and some from the Eastern states. There was, however, some dissatisfaction in Council with the

acquisitive system, largely because it was felt that the prize did not necessarily equal the value of the winning paintings, and also because on occasions Councillors did not like the winning painting. It was therefore changed to an arrangement where a non-acquisitive prize was awarded, and the judge made a separate selection of paintings which were purchased by sponsors to complement the collection. On this basis, the Gallery acquired some worthwhile paintings before the Prize ended in the 1970s.[63] Naracoorte Art Gallery, the first regional gallery in South Australia, ran a short-lived purchase award in 1971 and 1972.

Observations

The prospect of receiving acquisitions as the result of competitions must have been attractive for galleries which were building their collections, especially in cases where the prize was provided by an external sponsor. The prospect of sales of entries which yielded a commission was also attractive. In both cases, artists were usually represented as potential beneficiaries, and in some cases at least, this was in fact the primary intention of the competition. For example, the *Fremantle Print Awards* were planned specifically to provide a challenge and a learning experience for artists, and the *Rockhampton Art Competition* was designed for local artists. The *Mildura Sculpture Triennial*, especially in its final stages, was extremely successful in providing unique opportunities for artists to create experimental work. The specialisations which were developed by some galleries were intended primarily to enhance the status of the gallery, but at the same time they offered encouragement for artists to work in this specialised field, and they fostered public interest in it. The fact that they had work hung in public art galleries provided recognition for artists. Competitions could therefore add to their professional status in more than one way.

A difficulty was that the relationship between the amount of the prize and the value of the work which was acquired could be open to question by both the gallery and the artists. Purchases were perhaps more directly useful for galleries, since they made it possible for choices to be geared to the needs of the gallery, but acquisition by purchase could be a temptation to buy several more economically priced works rather than one large one. Moreover, both acquisition and purchase could tend to concentrate interest on price rather than the nature of the work.

These competitions, like those in the major galleries, generated critical comment in the local press and also in specialised journals, and this comment on the competition provided excellent publicity for the sale of art objects. The competitions provided communities with special occasions which focussed interest on both the gallery and the competing artists, and offered them an opportunity to make their own judgements, and to make purchases. As Elwyn Lynn remarked, for viewers whose taste is unformed, to have art presented as a bit of a gamble robs it of too much disconcerting seriousness.[63] On the basis of his wide experience as a peripatetic judge, he described the role of the art prize competition in country NSW and Victoria as the best way to see new art, because substantial open prizes were likely to attract artists from elsewhere, as well as encouraging local artists.[64]

Competitions sponsored by local government bodies

The Mosman and Albury competitions, which were mentioned in relation to the first phase, were pioneers which were also survivors. There were a number of other cases from the 1950s onwards, particularly in NSW, where local government bodies held art competitions which were not associated with an existing or even a projected gallery. This could be an expensive exercise if reasonably generous prizes were offered, but it was also an effective way of making a public gesture towards art and local artists, without becoming involved in the permanent upkeep of a gallery. Other advantages were that it might be possible to draw on the help of the community in running the competition, and that local commercial interests were often most willing to contribute to the prizes as a public relations gesture. The sponsor could, of course, also expect to get a tangible benefit from acquisitive prizes and from sales.

Several municipal councils in the Sydney area initiated competitions between the 1950s and the 1970s, but few have lasted to the present time. These competitions are listed separately, and it is interesting to note the achievements of some of them.[65] The *Warringah Art Prize*, for example, began as the *Warringah Shire Art Exhibition* in 1955. All exhibits were for sale, and the 80 guinea prize was won by Arthur Murch, a former winner of the Archibald Prize. It was later established as an annual acquisitive prize, which gave local residents an opportunity to exhibit their work, but it was to encounter problems

because of the dislike of Councillors for abstract painting. It continued, however, with prize money of $8,500.

The Hunters Hill Shire Council, having had large attendances at loan art exhibitions, began an annual competition in 1957, offering four non-acquisitive prizes worth 140 guineas and continuing until at least 1983 when the prize was $1,000. Winners included a number of well-known artists such as Grace Cossington Smith, Maximilian Feuerring and Eva Kubbos. In Ryde, the Municipal Art Society worked with the Council to stage the *Ryde Art Award* at the Civic Centre from 1959 until the 1990s. In 1964 there were four acquisitive prizes each of £50, for traditional and modern oils and watercolours.

The *Rockdale Art Prize* provides a good illustration of the social role of an art competition. Rockdale in the 1950s was a middle class community with strong cultural interests, including an orchestra and opera society, both supported by the Council. An enthusiastic proposal for an art competition (inspired by discussions with Alderman Gamble of Mosman) was put to Council by a new Councillor, Alderman Saunders, in 1954. It stressed benefits such as "an undoubted advance towards a civilised community", enhanced prestige for the Council, and the acquisition of a collection of first class paintings.[66] The Cultural Activities Committee also wished to encourage school children to persevere in their artistic studies. The proposal was accepted, and the first competition was held in 1955, with a prize of 80 guineas. It attracted over 300 adult entries, which were for sale, and 2,000 from children. The exhibition was visited by 6,000 people.

Staging the successive exhibitions was a community affair, with help from local clubs, and there were elaborate opening ceremonies, with floral displays provided by the ladies. There were also painting demonstrations. A speaker at the 1961 opening noted with some satisfaction that the 460 entries received by Rockdale was a higher number than that for the *Wynne* and *Archibald Prizes*. Controversy between supporters of "Traditional" and "Contemporary" art was addressed, at the suggestion of Erik Langker (one of the judges, and President of the Trustees of the AGNSW), by providing separate classes for "Academic" and "Contemporary" in both oils and watercolours, and a *Popular Painting Prize* was begun in 1957 to encourage public participation.

The twenty-second *Art Award* in 1976 (with a prize of $250) was the last, probably because of dwindling community interest, and because after Alderman Saunders left the Council no other Councillor had personally adopted it. The art competition was taken over by the Rockdale Rotary Club which had already been conducting a similar exhibition. Acquisitions by the Council had ceased in 1960, but it occasionally made purchases.[67] The competition seems to have been run with enthusiasm, but without art expertise, although experienced judges were used. It was very much a community occasion.

Several local government authorities in country NSW which sponsored art competitions during this period have also been listed.[68] Like the competitions in Sydney suburbs, few still continue. A cluster of Councils in the mid north coast began holding competitions with some idea of acquiring works for a future community art collection. One of the earliest was in Taree, where the Council, although it had no art gallery, had a policy of purchasing one or more of the works selected as winners. It seems to have ended the competition in about 1977, when it offered a total of $1,500 for purchases of paintings and works in related media. The works which had been purchased were held in the Council Chambers until 1988, when the Manning Regional Art Gallery was established, and they were transferred to it. A new gallery has just been opened, and its inaugural exhibition consisted of the works purchased through the competition.

In Grafton, the Jacaranda Art Society began an annual acquisitive award, the *Jacaranda Art Prize*, in 1961, as part of the Jacaranda Festival. There was no public art gallery in the town, and the acquisitions were held by the City Council as the basis of a collection for a future gallery. The *Maitland Prize* also began in the 1950s and was organised by an Art Prize Committee, of which the Council, the local branch of the Arts Council and the local Agricultural and Horticultural Association were sponsors. The Committee acknowledged that it had been mainly guided by the Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, and stated its aims as being to encourage interest and understanding of art and to form the nucleus of a city collection. Like Taree, it made purchases rather than awarding prizes, and its selection was made on the advice of the judge, who in the first year was the artist William Dobell. In that year it was specified that the prizes were for industrial subjects, and the Committee expressed the hope that artists would find inspiration in this restricted field.[69] Over time there were

some non-acquisitive prizes and some commercial sponsorships. A gallery was established in 1972/73 and the *Prize* collection obviously forms an important part of its holdings.

Muswellbrook Council signified its interest in art by giving prizes for drawings and paintings, with some emphasis on local artists, at a local festival in 1958. This became an annual award, and, by the mid 1970s, a purchase award. Also in the 1970s, a small gallery, which was to become a regional gallery, was established to hold the works acquired. By 1980 the purchase amount had risen to $2,000. Other sponsored prizes were offered, including one for local artists.[70] Another Shire Council in the area to offer an acquisitive prize was Gosford, which held competitions annually between 1970 and 1976, but presumably lost interest in its acquisitions and has never established a gallery.

Outside NSW, few local government authorities involved themselves with the running of art competitions unless they were intent on acquiring a collection for a gallery. In Victoria, however, the Shire of Eltham offered a small award for painting in 1967 and a major one in 1987, and Frankston City Council offered an acquisitive art prize in 1974. The Shire of Diamond Valley began offering an acquisitive prize in 1974 to contribute to a permanent collection of painting and craft which was held by the Council, with emphasis increasingly on invitation and acquisition rather than competition.[71]

In Western Australia, the Shire of Derby began offering an annual award of $350 for local residents in 1970, providing the only opportunity for local artists to exhibit. The Award is now acquisitive, and it offers a prize of $1,000.[72] In Katherine, in the NT, the Town Council, with the support of some local enthusiasts, also began a competition for local artists in 1976, and now offers a prize of $2,500.[73] Respondents to the Survey from these centres were particularly enthusiastic about the popularity of these awards for artists and the community.

Observations

In general, the comments made in relation to competitions sponsored by public galleries other than "national" galleries apply to local government sponsors also. In suburban competitions the entrants were often, but not always, local artists. The resulting acquisitions were

held in situations where there was no curatorial expertise, and, with some exceptions, did not form significant collections. Particularly in NSW country towns, however, collections could become more significant, forming the trigger for establishment of a gallery, and subsequently a nucleus of the collection. The competitions which they sponsored were, however, generally directed to local artists and to amateurs.

Competitions sponsored by individuals

There was no significant increase in the number of new art competitions sponsored by individuals during this phase. One of the first individual sponsors was Helena Rubinstein, beauty expert, business magnate and art connoisseur. Australia was the country in which she had begun her business soon after the turn of the century. She returned in 1957 at the age of 85 as a triumphant celebrity, and her major gesture of beneficence took the form of the *Helena Rubinstein Travelling Art Scholarship*. Characteristically, she announced this at a reception given in her honour at the AGNSW. It was explained that she had given similar grants in France and America, and that she had wanted to do something for Australian art.[74] It was a generous gift, providing £1,300 annually to the painter selected. Again characteristically, it was run by her own organisation and not by the Gallery, although she used the Gallery for its exhibitions and for prestigious openings by public figures, and the Gallery Board Room for the associated hospitality.[75]

The panel of up to seven judges changed each year. Few Trustees of the AGNSW were included, but several women were, including Mary Alice Evatt, then the only woman Trustee. Hal Missingham, the Director of the Gallery, was, however, a member of every Panel, and Chairman several times.[76] The panel had the responsibility of choosing ten or twelve artists who were to be invited to take part, having been selected for their "creative and forward looking talent". Again, a few women were chosen. Competitors were each required to submit five paintings, but might be judged also on other work known to the Panel.[77] As an assessment for a scholarship, it was clearly directed to the potential of the artists rather than to the "best" picture. In some years, judging took place in Melbourne and Adelaide, and the exhibition toured to other states. This project represented a new approach to sponsorship. For the artists, it offered generous patronage which aimed to reward

genuine creativity, and which was free from the conservative influence of the Gallery. For the sponsor, it created an excellent impression of informed generosity. It is likely, however, that it was not so much Madame Rubinstein, the grateful former resident of Australia, who was responsible for the scholarship, as Madame Rubinstein, the astute business woman who was alert to opportunities for publicity and possibly also taxation deductions, and had already made similar gifts in other countries. It was appropriate that, after her death, Helena Rubinstein was commemorated through her Australian headquarters in Perth by a portrait prize with a prize of £300.

Other individual benefactors offered scholarships reflecting different concepts during the same period. One was the *Alice Bale Art Award*, first given in 1969 in Victoria. Like the *Rubinstein Prize* it was a generous award. Unlike the *Rubinstein Prize* it was for artists working in the field of traditional realism and figurative art, and none of its beneficiaries seem to have made their way into the mainstream of contemporary art.[78] In 1971 the Keith and Elisabeth Murdoch Travelling Fellowship superseded the NGV Travelling Scholarship for graduate students from the Victorian College of the Arts, and the Murdoch family has since then maintained and updated this scholarship. Moya Dyring, an Australian painter who lived mainly in Paris, bequeathed her Paris apartment for use by Australian students, a practical gesture which has been administered since 1970 by the AGNSW.

The *Portia Geach Memorial Award*, which was first offered in 1965, was essentially a feminist challenge to the *Archibald Prize*. It was endowed by Florence Geach, the sister of Portia Geach, who had died in 1959. Portia Geach was a painter who had trained at the Royal Academy, London, and had exhibited in Australia and overseas, specialising in portraiture. She was a feminist and a campaigner on women's issues, and had always considered herself disadvantaged in relation to male artists. The prize was for a portrait by a female artist resident in Australia, and its conditions mirrored the preferential clauses of the *Archibald Prize*. The entries are, however, available for sale. The original prize of £1,000 has now risen to $18,000. Whatever current attitudes may be to the idea of another portrait prize, and particularly a gender specific one, it seems likely that staging a female version of the *Archibald Prize* would have met with the approval of the feminist it commemorates. The prize is now controlled by the Permanent Trustee

Company of NSW, and has been administered on its behalf by the Art Council and currently by Arts Management, so that it is independent of art institutions such as the AGNSW. It is, of course, bound by the provisions of Florence Geach's Will, and the Permanent Trustee had evidently had doubts about the nature of the *Prize*, because in 1980 it consulted the AGNSW about the conduct and nature of the award. The Trustees of the Gallery considered that the courts might be sympathetic to ending the restraining clauses, on the grounds that they could be regarded as discriminatory, and they favoured removing them, but their suggestion does not seem to have been followed up.[79] It might have been a disappointment to Portia Geach that the prize has not provoked controversy in the same way as the *Archibald*, but it has developed its own character, and it seems to have evoked a feeling of comradeship among its entrants.[80]

Observations

These benefactions represent the major gifts made by individuals for kinds of art competitions which they themselves specified, and they therefore differ from other cases, such as the *Cornell Prize* and the *Taffs Prize*, donated to the CAS in South Australia and NSW respectively, where individuals have supported organisations by sponsoring prizes on their behalf. One of their features is that the award often consisted of scholarships for future study, and that they were therefore directed to the professional potential of individual artists, and, unlike the Portia Geach Prize, were not concerned with sales. In some cases they were influenced by the sponsor's own experience, and therefore imposed requirements which reflected the predilections of the sponsor. As a commentator noted in relation to the *Maude Vizard-Wholohan Prize*, prizes are often offered for categories of art which have been largely abandoned by many of the best artists.[81]

Mme Rubinstein's competition seems to have been a more complex blend of altruistic support for art and business instinct, and it no doubt reflected her own personality. Unmistakably, its thrust was to identify innovation and independence, and to provide a stimulus for artists of ability at a professional level, and incidentally to demonstrate Rubinstein's generosity to a select audience which was largely associated with Sydney society and the AGNSW.

Competitions sponsored for commercial purposes

The original reason for sponsorship of art competitions by commercial enterprises was to attract ideas for designs for some practical purpose, or to promote the sponsor's products. Both of these types of sponsorships continued to be exploited during the second phase. A major new development was, however, that commercial sponsors began to make use of art competitions in what amounted to a sophisticated form of indirect advertising, a technique which had been demonstrated by Helena Rubinstein from the late 1950s onwards. Some of these projects were on an ambitious scale, in which the size of the prize and the quality of the organisation was intended to reflect the prestige of the sponsor. Clearly, experience of competition in business translated logically into recognition of the benefits of competition in art.

I will begin by discussing some examples of the first category of commercial sponsorships. An early one originated with the textile firm of Silk and Textile Printers, which had bases in Sydney and Hobart. Claudio Alcorso, its Chairman, was concerned with the need to develop new fabric designs, and he consulted Hal Missingham, Director of the AGNSW, about the idea of asking leading artists to produce designs, and also about his doubts as to whether artists would want to be involved with industry. Missingham was confident that they would. Accordingly, in 1946 some thirty well known artists were invited to produce designs for fabrics. The artists were enthusiastic. They submitted a number of interesting designs, and a selection of these was reproduced for dress and furnishing fabrics. Although Alcorso himself worked hard at marketing them, however, they proved to be too unconventional to find buyers.[82] This experiment was described by Joseph Burke, the first Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne, as being of the greatest importance in the history of Australian art (although overlooked in formal histories) because it brought originals by distinguished painters into ordinary homes.[83] The results were apparently considered promising enough to encourage Leroy-Alcorso to hold a competition for textile designs with a prize of £300 in the early 1950s, but it does not seem to have resulted in a new school of textile design. The Sydney firm of F. W. Grafton and Co. also held competitions for designs for dress fabrics, some of which were purchased, between 1951 and 1953.[84]

Another commercial organisation which made use of art and an art competition for a commercial purpose was Dunlop Rubber Australia, which described its concept as a fusion of industry and art. It explained that its philosophy was that a large commercial undertaking had an obligation to the aesthetic side of the community, and that, rather than commissioning special paintings, it should encourage contemporary art.[85] Its strategy was to award good prizes, to be philosophical about controversy over the winners, and to display them throughout Australia. As a by-product, winning paintings were reproduced for sale or for use in the firm's calendars. Art historian Franz Philipp was ambivalent in his comments on the third *Dunlop Art Contest*, questioning the decisions of the judges and their conception of the role of competitions of this type. He asked whether it was to encourage younger, less recognised artists rather than more accomplished older artists, or whether it was simply to reward paintings which would be suitable for reproduction in the calendars published by Dunlop. Alternatively, he surmised that the decisions might represent compromise among a group of judges who could not agree.[86] On a much smaller scale, Rowney and Co., manufacturers of artists' supplies, offered their own products as prizes for a drawing exhibition which was held in 1959 and 1960.

These competitions had direct practical applications for their sponsors. The *Australian Women's Weekly Art Prize* which was offered annually between 1955 and 1959 also had practical applications for the publishers, although its stated aim was to encourage artists, to raise the standard of portrait painting in Australia, and also to promote greater public interest in art.[87] The fact that it was described as international suggested that it could provide a stimulus for Australian artists through seeing the work of overseas artists. It was presented in the context of a number of other less ambitious competitions run by the *Australian Women's Weekly*. Readers were therefore familiar with the concept of competition, and readily accepted the idea of a prize which at £15,000 was the richest in the Commonwealth, and one of the biggest in the world.[88] The subjects specified - a woman, or a woman with a child, or a young child, appealed to the *Women's Weekly* audience, and the popularity of portraiture had already been demonstrated by the *Archibald Prize*. There was a separate prize of £500 for a woman painter, so that a woman artist was automatically available as a subject for editorial discussion. The competition attracted large numbers of entries from Australia and some from

overseas, and some critics compared it favourably to the Archibald exhibition, although it certainly did not attract the Archibald brand of controversy.[89] It supplied valuable copy for a periodical which, as was pointed out in relation to its first award, went into almost every home in the Commonwealth. Romantic biographies of painters, and reports of openings by distinguished Australians were published. The exhibition was seen by large numbers of people during its nine or ten month tours of galleries in several States. In addition to its direct benefits to its sponsors and winning entrants, the competition must have provided a great stimulus to popular interest in art. It ended after the 1958 award because Frank Packer, the owner of the *Australian Women's Weekly*, refused to accept the conditions imposed by the NGV on display of the touring exhibition.[90]

A simple and direct form of advertisement for a business was devised by the Italian shipping line Flotto Lauro. Each year from 1967 to 1972 it offered one prize for painting and one for sculpture, consisting of return First Class fares to Italy, an attractive award for artists.

The Alcorso-Sekers and Dunlop competitions were enterprising exercises in using art competitions to develop designs for particular purposes. Another competition which involved design and was closely associated with the sponsor's product was the *COMALCO Invitation Award* for sculpture, which will be discussed in more detail later in relation to its carefully planned arrangements for adjudication. The significant feature of the sponsorship itself was that it was based on recognition of the relationship between sculpture and architecture, and on the intention of developing this relationship.[91] In practice, COMALCO achieved this by inviting some sculptors to submit maquettes for a sculpture for a nominated situation, and by selecting one of these as the winner. In some cases the award led to a commission. The link with the firm's own business was that aluminium was to be the material used, and that COMALCO supplied all or part of the aluminium needed. The competition ended in 1972 after six years, perhaps partly because it was felt that it had served its purpose, and partly because of the expense involved at a time when the market for aluminium was depressed. It had, however, demonstrated an imaginative attitude to architectural sculpture. It had encouraged architects to give serious consideration to the use of sculpture, and it had introduced a number of architects to work with aluminium in a

way which would otherwise have been unlikely for them. It presumably also earned some taxation relief for the firm.

The COMALCO project was designed to convince both architects and sculptors of the potential of aluminium as a medium for sculpture. A more traditional use of competition to select a design for a specific project was the creation of an abstract sculpture for a small city square which was being developed in the centre of Melbourne. This project was to become unusually controversial. It is therefore not really representative, but it is interesting because it illustrates dramatically the potential complexity of holding competitions for public sculpture, especially where (as is usually the case) the sculptural object is in the public eye.

In this case, the architects who were commissioned to design the square had briefed a short list of three sculptors (chosen from over forty applicants) on the implications of the architectural setting, including its heritage factors. The winning design was submitted by Ron Robertson-Swann, an Australian who had extensive experience in Britain and had won important prizes, including the *Mildura Prize* and the *COMALCO Award*, in Australia. It was selected, on the basis of a model, by a committee which included the design architects for the Square and also Professor Patrick McCaughey of Monash University and Michael Shannon of the Visual Arts Board. Their choice was accepted by the Lord Mayor and a majority of the Councillors, and in December 1978 Robertson-Swann was commissioned to proceed with the $70,000 project, half of the cost of which was to be met by BHP.[92]

Erection of the sculpture, which was entitled *Vault*, was completed in May 1980. It was an angular assemblage of steel plates, over five metres high, and painted brilliant yellow. Its colour was not consistent with National Trust guidelines, but these presumably allowed special dispensations for works of art. It must have dominated the other features of the relatively small square, which included a fountain, a pool, a memorial and a TV screen. *Vault* achieved instant notoriety. It was criticised by the Council and provoked abundant comment, both critical and approving, in the Press, which, with cold war overtones, dubbed it *The Yellow Peril*.[93] Artists and architects protested against the uninformed criticism, and the National Gallery of Victoria and the

Australian Art Gallery Directors' Council came to the defence of the sculpture and the artist.[94]

The complaint by the artist that some Councillors were using it for their own political ends seems to have been justified. In spite of a recommendation from its City Square Committee that the sculpture be retained, the Council voted several times on a proposal to remove it, and finally agreed to do so by a narrow margin in July 1979. Shortly afterwards, the Council was arbitrarily replaced by Commissioners, but about a year later *Vault* was stealthily removed at night by a private contractor, at a cost of about $30,000, and was re-assembled in an inconspicuous position elsewhere in Melbourne.[95] A proposal that it be relocated to the National Gallery of Victoria had apparently not been considered by the Council, perhaps because this might have raised difficult questions of ownership.

This story, which is covered in more detail in Appendix 4, is a dramatic example of a problem which is not uncommon in competitions when the sponsor, who is not an expert, delegates responsibility for selecting the winner to an expert, but does not agree with the expert's decision. The question then is whether the sponsor is prepared to meet an obligation to maintain the standards and conditions of the competition for the benefit of the competitors, or alternatively insists on imposing his own, probably less expert, judgement, and possibly infringing the artist's rights. In the case of *Vault* the Councillors seem to have been willing to make use of both the sculpture and the sculptor in a final gesture of defiance, in the process spending a considerable sum of money for which they no longer had responsibility.

The introduction of art competitions in agricultural shows created a new situation in which the sponsors had no expertise in art but were preoccupied with competition, a situation which was exemplified by the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW at its Royal Easter Show, and which in turn echoed some 19th century shows. Handicrafts sections seem to have flourished at the Show over a long period, perhaps because they provided an outlet for women's skills. In 1957 the Council of the RAS discussed enlarging the Arts and Handicrafts Section in order to make full use of its new Arts and Craft Pavilion. It was agreed that an art competition would create widespread interest and make a definite contribution to the development of art among artists and the general

public. On the advice of Hal Missingham the Council decided to offer competition classes for paintings on the subjects of "Industry" and "Rural", and sponsors promised two prizes of £500 each.[96] Missingham prophesied that leading artists from throughout Australia would enter, and pointed out that the Society would collect commissions on all sales. He also supported a suggestion by the Committee that the exhibition should open for two days before the Show proper, so that art lovers would be able to enjoy it in relatively peaceful conditions, a plan which does not seem to have eventuated.[97] The new competition was expected to be a big attraction. It had the advantage of not conflicting with other sections, and it received excellent publicity. It has now been held annually for over forty years, and its sections have proliferated. Subjects are usually specified for paintings. Sponsors have always been forthcoming, but Missingham's vision of participation by leading artists does not seem to have materialised, and it has become largely an event for amateurs. It is significant that, as early as 1960, the Director wrote personally to about eighty prominent artists inviting them to enter.[98]

The organisers seem to have been confident about their ability to run competitions and to establish standards, while not necessarily recognising that the milieu might not attract professional artists in the same way as it attracted expert agriculturalists.[99] Other agricultural shows have also staged amateur art competitions. For example, the Royal Adelaide Exhibition in 1957 offered a *Special Art Prize* of £200 for a composition on an industrial subject, with Hal Missingham again officiating as judge. It also offered three classes of medals for entries which reached certain standards. In both cases, the organisers seem to have been convinced that the Show provided an occasion at which standards in art were developed in the same way as they were in other classes of exhibits.

By the 1960s commercially sponsored art competitions were becoming more varied in their application and intentions. The *Britannica Awards,* for example, stood alone as a kind of elite patronage conferred by the *Encyclopedia Britannica,* and announced by it as a stimulus to Australian progress and development. One of the five annual awards made in various disciplines was for "outstanding contribution to the development of Australian art". It consisted of a gold medal and £5,000 in cash, and was described by its sponsors as the richest annual art

prize in the world. Winners were selected by a committee of independent experts, and, as in the case of Dr Ursula Hoff, a distinguished art historian and curator, in 1966, were not necessarily artists. It was a prestigious award which reflected some of its prestige on its sponsors.

Several other awards which were similarly sponsored were smaller or were given over shorter periods. Examples are the Rural Bank of Victoria, which in 1964 offered a prize as a memorial to John F. Kennedy, the State Savings Bank of Victoria, which was seeking pictures for its calendars, the Newcastle Hotel wanting to acquire a painting in 1962, David Jones in Brisbane offering an open prize over two or three years, and the *Royal Hotel Art Prize* in Brisbane in 1973 which offered an acquisitive prize of seventy-five guineas for Australian landscape, seascape or portraiture.

By the 1960s it had been accepted that the commercial sponsor of an art competition might have no direct business connection with the artistic purpose of the competition, a situation which made the idea of sponsoring a competition attractive to business enterprises. In general, international companies were not major sponsors, although the tobacco company of W. D. and H.O. Wills offered annual awards of £500 between 1960 and 1966 for the best painting of any subject (in the later years for invited artists only), and Goya Australia offered prizes for artists aged under twenty-five from all states. Several petrol companies gave awards over short periods.[100]

It was a few Australian companies which launched the more ambitious commercially sponsored competitions. The first, and perhaps the most original, of these was the *Transfield Prize*. It was begun in 1961 as a gesture to mark the fifth anniversary of the major construction firm Transfield Pty. Ltd., which had been established by two Italian migrants. One of them, Franco Belgiorno Nettis, had a strong personal interest in art and artists and was committed to supporting them. He believed that industry should take on the role of patron and sponsor. The idea of a prize appealed to him because it offered an incentive to artists and because of the excitement which it would generate for them and for the public. He saw the purpose of the prize as being to provide a stimulus, and the associated exhibition was intended to present a

cross section of the best work currently being produced. It was also, of course, evidence of the success and enterprise of Transfield Pty Ltd.

The prize was originally £1,000, which was increased to $5,000 in 1969 when it became acquisitive.[101] There were other significant changes during the lifetime of the *Transfield Prize.* The general themes which had at first been specified for entries were abandoned, and in 1970 and 1971 artists were invited to take part and to enter three works instead of one. The choice of judges, which will be discussed later, was unconventional, and was crucial in establishing the character of the award. The prize attracted good numbers of entries - about 130 in 1964, and, surprisingly, over one hundred in 1966 when it was awarded for sculpture. It also attracted considerable critical interest, and, taken as a whole, was described by the judges for 1968, lecturer and critic Donald Brook and critic Ross Lansell, as "the finest prize exhibition of recent times".[102] Franco Belgiorno Nettis himself felt that the years 1960 to 1970 had been an exciting period, but that the mushrooming increase in the numbers of prizes had made them passe by about 1973.[103] The *Transfield Prize* was offered for the last time in 1971, and he then diverted his enthusiastic support to the Sydney Biennale.

In Melbourne in the 1960s, Georges' department store began the *Georges Invitation Art Awards.* In the 1940s the store had created its own small gallery, using it to show paintings, photographs and furniture, but it closed in 1948. In 1962 the management adopted its Merchandise Director's suggestion of holding an art prize to encourage young artists, and developed a larger gallery for the purpose.[104] On the advice of Alan McCulloch and Alan Warren, art critics of the *Herald* and *Sun* respectively, they agreed to make it a national competition, an ambition which was supported by the fact that the prize money consisting of non-acquisitive awards of £750, £250 and £50 totalled £50 more than the *Transfield Prize.* This was to be an expensive project for Georges, and one which continued for over twenty years. It involved not only the prize money but the costs of administration, judging and transport. In 1972 the awards became acquisitive, and the works acquired were distributed to regional galleries in Victoria, and another acquisitive prize of $1,000 was given for the best work. The historian of Georges noted that the Directors were in fact astonished at the cost of the project.[105] In 1981 the total prize money was increased to $10,000. Prizes remained acquisitive and the acquisitions continued

to be sent to the regional galleries, which were regrettably not always suitably appreciative of the works which were allocated to them. In 1982 the competition became biennial, and there was an acquisitive prize of $2,500, with $7,000 to be spend on purchases for distribution.

From the beginning the Awards were organised and controlled by Alan McCulloch, who chose and chaired the judging panels and, with unfailing enthusiasm, wrote the catalogue introductions. Inevitably, there was an impression of partisanship, because the judges recommended the entrants as well as the winners - a process which the Catalogue for 1971 (a year in which most of the fifteen artists selected were under 30) described as a way of giving continued vitality through the infusion of new blood. There were some changes. In 1970 painters were asked to submit drawings as well as paintings.[106] In 1982 the competition was limited to works on paper (other than prints). It is interesting that, of the total of more than eighty works which were acquired, only fifteen were by women painters. In 1984 the prize ended. The Managing Director of Georges, which had now been taken over by new owners, announced that it was felt that the prize money was not enough to attract established artists, and that it could not justify more expenditure on the competition.[107]

Introductions to catalogues had claimed that the prize had been a stabilising survivor through changes of style, [108] a view which would not have been echoed by press critics, who often criticised the choice of both invited artists and of winners. It is true that the prize had been a survivor, and that it had experienced controversies, but its stability could have been seen as due to conservatism. There is, however, some justice in the statement in the catalogue for the second exhibition that the prizes most attractive to artists and of general art interest are the big prizes offered by business firms.[109] In the case of Georges, this was largely because the prizes were generous, the standards of judging were relatively high, and the competition was a recurring fixture which could be anticipated by artists. These advantages were, however, to become disadvantages over time - the relative value of the prizes diminished, judging was seen as parochial, and the competition itself became too repetitive.

No major innovative prizes were initiated during the 1970s, nor, on the whole, were there any new competitions and prizes associated

specifically with the sponsor's business. The *Sydney Morning Herald Art Prize* was an exception. It was sponsored by J. Fairfax and Sons with the City of Sydney Cultural Council, and offered a generous prize of $7,500. It was given between 1978 and 1988 for paintings which captured the unique features of Sydney, and it yielded a collection of paintings, mainly of the harbour, which were newsworthy because of their local appeal as well as their artistic qualities. It was complemented by a travelling scholarship.

In the 1970s the hospitality industry gave a cluster of prizes, including the *Parmelia Portrait Prize* of $1,200 in Perth, the *Toohey's Paint-a-Pub Prize* of $3,400 in Sydney and the *Ryecroft Invitation Purchase* ($5,000) in South Australia. The *Travelodge Art Prize*, based in Victoria, was a more ambitious award planned to create a prestigious art collection for an expanding hotel chain with international links. It offered an annual prize of $7,500, then the largest individual prize in Australia. Fifteen well known or emerging artists were invited to submit two paintings each, so that the winning paintings which were acquired, and also any purchases which were made, were of an acceptable standard. The art collection formed a useful feature of the decor at the firm's social functions.[110] Other less commercially supported competitions, often short-lived, were run by a variety of sponsors.[111]

Sponsorship of art competitions by the tobacco industry had been pioneered by W.D and H.O. Wills in Sydney in the 1960s. Other tobacco firms, keen to improve their image in the community, now supported art in different ways. Phillip Morris, for example, in 1973 established a $100,000 fund to acquire works by "bold and innovative artists", and to exhibit them in public galleries throughout Australia. The Peter Stuyvesant Foundation was established as part of the Rothman's Holdings Community Service program in 1964, "in keeping with the Company's corporate desire to benefit the people of Australia".[112] Rothman's National Sport Foundation and the Rothman's University Endowment Fund were set up at much the same time, during a period when the tobacco industry was exposed to severe criticism because of its health implications.[113] The Stuyvesant organisation was active in funding touring art exhibitions, mainly from overseas, and in supporting the performing arts and literature, activities which were acclaimed in its own publications. Its only sponsorship of Australian art through a competition seems to have been its annual

contribution of the prize for the Shoalhaven Art and Ceramic Acquisition Exhibition in the 1980s.

Some other international companies sponsored competitions in a relatively modest way. In Melbourne in 1970, First Leasing, the Australian branch of an American company, sponsored a competition with total prize money of $13,000, and with the stated aim of directing more attention to Australian art and artists, particularly in Australia and America. It was probably also a relatively economical way of acquiring a small collection. Caltex, in particular, seems to have responded willingly to requests for sponsorship for competitions based in galleries, municipalities and festivals throughout the country. It contributed prizes for competitions based, for example, in the Adelaide Festival, the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, the City of Rockhampton and the City of Brisbane.

Observations

Commercial sponsors of competitions naturally had a business-like attitude to them, often visualising them as having some kind of association with their own area of activity. This was particularly the case with competitions for designs for a specific purpose, where the outcomes were not always satisfactory for sponsors, as in the case of the Alcorso experiment and the Melbourne City Council Square debacle. In the former the sponsor was pleased with the results of the competition, but they proved to be unacceptable in the market place. In the latter, the sponsors had little compunction about disregarding expert opinion and negating the intention of the competition. Sponsors in the hospitality industry planned a commercial use for their acquisitions, and competitions sponsored by the media were designed to provide appropriately useful information. In essence, they probably regarded the artists as skilled producers in a special field which could provide products which were useful to them. For them, a competition was a convenient device for attracting artists to participate and publicly displaying the sponsor's goodwill in a cultural atmosphere. COMALCO seems to have represented a compromise position, where the competition was cleverly used to promote a product, and at the same time to provide practical opportunities for artists and to introduce them to an unusual medium.

For other commercial sponsors, receiving value for money was no doubt also an important consideration. This meant that they were willing to offer generous prizes and expert judging, in return for which they expected entries which were of high quality, and the possibility of sales and commissions. For the firm of Georges, the chief benefit would have been simply the publicity value of the exhibition and the distribution of works which had been acquired, and it is remarkable that the competition continued for so long. In the case of Transfield there was undoubtedly prestige for the firm in its sponsorship. There was, however, also a strong personal interest on the part of Franco Belgiorno Nettis, and he later transferred his support to the Biennale which he saw as providing a freer kind of support. The amount of the prizes was obviously an important factor, and it translated into a measure of the stature of the artist and of the art object. In a sense, both became, at least temporarily, the property of the sponsor.

Good prizes, and especially the very large ones, reflected a concept of market values which would have been particularly relevant at a time when auctions were generating high prices for the work of established Australian artists. The focus was simply transferred from them to newer contemporary artists. This was an important development for artists, and it was one which could only have taken place in a commercial sphere which was not subject to the limitations and conventions of art institutions. Commercially inspired sponsorships also had the advantage of implying that art was a sound commercial proposition, and fostering the idea of sales, which, of course, were important for artists, as well as bringing commissions to the sponsors.

A number of art competitions came to the attention of only a limited public, but it is safe to assume that this public had been targetted when the competition was planned. Some, and particularly those staged by the media, reached a wide, and probably in many cases, a new audience. The *Australian Women's Weekly Portrait Prize*, for example, must have presented the concept of competition and of difference in art, and in portraiture in particular, at a popular level to members of the community who had no previous interest in art. *Vault* would have been highly visible in Melbourne, and the saga of *Vault* would accordingly have been of great interest to the public, although it is doubtful to what extent it would have interested them in issues such as artistic

innovation and the rights of artists, especially as it appears that the Press concentrated attention on political rather than artistic aspects.

The influence and effect of commercially inspired art competitions was now being discussed from different angles by the critics. Elwyn Lynn, writing in *Hemisphere*, noted that the sure way to attract notice is to win a prize or to be bought by a publicity-minded collector, and he went on to say that prizes awarded by wealthy corporations tend to treat art as an incidental part of good public relations, a perception which seems to apply to most of the commercial sponsors.[114] The critic Terry Smith, was even more critical. He saw the Australian emphasis on art prizes as evidence of cultural backwardness and a primitive level of response to art on the part of sponsors. He objected to companies trying to get prestige and tax concessions in return for their support, and, even worse, trying to guarantee the standards of their acquisitions by restricting entry to invited artists, and so limiting the opportunities for little known artists. Further, he complained that art prizes promoted misunderstanding of the function of art criticism, because they were based on giving one first prize.[115]

In the 1970s, Daniel Thomas, on the basis of his long experience as curator, gallery director and critic, put forward an essentially practical view. This was that prizes that are given by business firms, even if initiated primarily for the wrong reasons, such as gaining publicity for themselves, may reflect genuine concern for excellence and may have value in bringing art to the public.[116]

Competitions held to promote ideas

In relation to Phase 1 I noted that there is an extra dimension to art competitions which are ideologically motivated. The *Blake Prize*, which had begun early in the 1950s, is the outstanding example of this situation. To put it into perspective, it is useful to consider other ideologically inspired competitions which were its contemporaries. Those with a religious basis were the *Great Synagogue Religious Prize* which was offered from 1964 to 1977, and the *St Mary's Cathedral Religious Art Prize*, 1971, both in Sydney. Little information is available concerning either. The *Great Synagogue Prize* does not seem to have commemorated an anniversary and was held mainly for public relations purposes.[117] It was judged in its first year by Max Feurring, an artist who was Jewish, and subsequently by James Gleeson, an artist who

was not Jewish, which suggests that its religious significance was not seen as pre-eminent. The *St Mary's Cathedral Prize* was organised by a committee to celebrate an anniversary, but again was held mainly for public relations purposes.[118] Both prizes were presumably religious in the sense that their subjects were religious, but it is not clear whether they were judged on subject matter, technique or other aspects. A competition which was apparently more concerned with religious feeling was the *Peace through Prayer Art Contest* which was held in Brisbane in 1965 and 1966, and which was for a painting suggesting this idea.[119] The *Latvian* and *Lithuanian Prizes*, offered in Melbourne in the 1960s, seem to have been awarded to the best paintings by Latvian or Lithuanian artists rather than for their success in expressing the spirit of these countries.

The *Blake Prize* was a more complex matter and I have discussed it in more detail in Appendix 3. Its history demonstrates the challenges which any art competition, and in particular an ideologically motivated one, presents to sponsors who are deeply committed to giving effect to their own convictions. Although the *Blake Prize* was conceived in an idealistic atmosphere, it was not long before its original intention of stimulating interest in religious art in Australia was beset with uncertainties. The group which organised it included members of the clergy, art teachers, artists and lay people, and in the early years the paintings selected as winners were generally acceptable to them. At the exhibitions associated with the prize, the entries which were selected for hanging were complemented by lectures and guided tours, and it became clear that, for some members of the group, religious education was seen as an important function of the prize. Difficulties began when some of the clergy who were members, notably Father Scott, one of the founders, and Father Kenny, criticised some of the abstract works which had won the prize as being unintelligible, arguing that they should contain at least an identifiable symbol.[120] Other members, on the other hand, including artist Lloyd Rees, pointed out that much religious thought is abstract, and that many artists were now producing abstract paintings.[121] In 1959, in the context of this controversy, the group restructured itself into a formally constituted body, the Blake Society. Subsequent choices of winners continued to attract similar criticism, but the Society managed to avoid the challenging task of defining religious art, and agreed that it should not enforce any particular philosophy of art.[122] As an attempt to overcome

the problem, a subject was set for the 1962 prize, but this subterfuge was criticised as showing a lack of understanding of the nature of modern art, and, in any case, resulted in selection of an abstract painting as winner.

The Society subsequently weathered the loss of its major sponsor and rejected suggestions that it should abandon the competition. It went on to find another sponsor and to continue its controversial course, using the forewords to catalogues as an annual opportunity to discuss current issues, and in particular the role of the artist. In 1965 the Society stated a position which it has continued to maintain - that the prize is awarded for the best painting, and not for its theological value. Its judging panels continued to represent both religious and artistic viewpoints, but, rather than judging the religious significance of works which were entered, it was now prepared to accept the belief of artists that their work was religious.[123] The 1973 foreword enunciated two principal motives - to invigorate religious art by making contemporary religious art available to religious institutions, and to reintroduce contemporary Australian artists to the great themes of religion.[124] Active didacticism was now a thing of the past.

By the late 1970s, as critic and painter Nancy Borlase remarked, the prize was attracting some fair to good artists. As had happened in the *Archibald Prize*, judging had become virtually irrelevant except as a focus for discussion. The successive controversies had, however, helped to maintain interest in the prize and in the concept of religion in art, and had also generated discussion on the question of the role of abstraction in art. Much of the debate in the press related to this question and to the decisions of the judges. The opinion of Dr Gertrude Langer, a leading Queensland critic and teacher, was that the prize had been excellent in discovering talents which could be commissioned for paintings for churches, and she concluded that over time some supreme religious artists would emerge.[125] Her optimism may not have been justified, but it is to the credit to the Blake Society that, although the prize was conceived originally as a way of serving religion through art, it survived to serve art through association with religion. Donald Brook however, writing in the SMH, disputed the premise on which the competition was based - that it is the function of works of art to convey non-verbal messages.[126]

Observations

The intention of the Blake Society was to focus attention on religious art through the competition, and through the works which were exhibited, and the relatively large prize was no doubt intended to indicate the importance of religious art, and also to attract entries in a genre which was not popular. The competition process, with the resulting exhibition, was envisaged as a community event, intended to attract the attention of viewers through works of art, but not necessarily on the basis of interest in art. It became apparent over time that some members of the Society saw the *Prize* as a way of maintaining the traditional function of art as a means of enlightenment, but that this attitude was not generally shared by artists. The Society showed that it respected artists as creative professionals rather than as individuals who would paint to order, because in the final analysis it accepted entries representing contemporary developments in art, rather than attempting to regress to more traditional styles. It used competitions as a way of attempting to influence artists and their work in a certain direction, but they were aware of its intentions, which were stated frankly. Nevertheless, it is possible to sense a kind of commercial intention, in which the prize was offered as a way of influencing the meaning of works of art.

Competitions sponsored by organisations in the community

The categories of sponsors which have been discussed by no means account for all the art competitions which have been held. A variety of other organisations have sponsored competitions for a variety of purposes, including providing encouragement for local artists. Their organisers might have no background of art expertise, but might be simply enthusiastic supporters of local artists, or of causes for which the sale of works of art can raise funds. Sponsors in this category are a phenomenon which had its origin during the 1950s and has developed vigorously since then. The resulting competitions are often significant because they are the main point of contact between artists, particularly local artists, and the local community. The exhibitions which they produce attract considerable interest because they are a recognised recurring event which is open to all artists. Depending on the size of the community, they may therefore become an important cultural occasion, and one which is influential in developing the community's conceptions of art. In some cases they can also have a social role, as

was illustrated by a survey carried out in 1977 by a team of sociology students of the University of Wollongong. The purpose of the survey, which was conducted at the township of Mount Kembla near Wollongong, was to assess the impact of an historical event as the inspiration for a community occasion. The result which was anticipated was that the traditions associated with a great mining disaster which had occurred some seventy years earlier would be of overwhelming significance. Instead, to everyone's surprise, there was a landslide vote for the Arts and Crafts exhibition as an event in which "just about everybody gets involved".[127]

Art competitions have been run by a great variety of groups within the community. Although this was probably the case during the first phase of competitions also, they are not easily identifiable for that period. Since then the numbers, although not necessarily the types, of sponsors, have multiplied. Some of these can be categorised, admittedly rather arbitrarily, as a basis for a general review of the ways in which art competitions have been used, and of attitudes to art and art competitions.

Other than those which have already been discussed, the main categories of formal institutions which have involved themselves with art competitions have been universities and schools. Universities clearly have a special responsibility to teach in the field of the visual arts and to promote appreciation of the arts on their own campus and within the community, and most universities have developed their own collections. Some have used art competitions for this purpose. One of the earliest was the University of WA, which occasionally offered prizes which were presumably acquisitive, from the 1960s onwards. Murdoch University offered an art prize to celebrate its inauguration in 1975. The University of Tasmania established a Fine Arts Committee which held an acquisitive *Print Prize* Exhibition in 1968. The University of Queensland received a bequest which became the *Darnell de Gruchy Invitation Purchase Award*, and functioned between 1969 and 1977. Because it was based on invitation and was acquisitive it enabled the University to build its collection of contemporary Australian art in a structured way. The University of NSW began collecting soon after it was established, through the efforts of the U Committee, a group of women associated with the University who excelled at fund raising. They established a *Travelling Scholarship* and an annual prize of $5,000

which was superseded successively by an *Invitation Art Exhibition* and a biennial *Art Purchase Exhibition*, both of which they funded. Their efforts created a core collection which later justified the appointment of a curator. This success was not accomplished without some controversy - one member of the Committee commented in retrospect:

> *"The whole subject has been divisive since its inception in 1978... the subjective nature of Visual Art causes division in the U Committee".*[128]

Most art competitions sponsored by schools were fundraising exercises. In Sydney the Cheltenham Girls High School began offering prizes of about $150 for traditional and modern paintings which were then available for sale. Prizes were not acquisitive, and the competition was presumably a successful fund raising venture since it continued into the 1980s. Apart from competitions intended for their pupils, a few schools such as Loyola College in Melbourne offered prizes at annual art shows which were probably also fund raisers.

Local Arts Festivals became increasingly popular, particularly in country areas, from the 1960s onwards, and festivals and art competitions seem to have been mutually compatible. The major festivals in capital cities, however, have been mainly concerned with the performing arts. The Perth Festival offered the T. *E. Wardle Invitation Art Prize* with a prize of £500 for a few years in the 1960s, presenting it in 1966 as "a collection of contemporary Australian Paintings submitted by leading Australian artists" but it was obviously not a major feature of the festival. The Melbourne Festival never seems to have sponsored an art competition although it has had art exhibitions. The Adelaide Festivals of the Arts have also generated a series of special exhibitions in the AGSA. McCulloch refers to a few special prizes given in the 1960s and 1970s in connection with the Festival, and there was a *South Australian Sculpture Prize* in 1968, but these do not seem to appear in the documentation of the Festival.[129] Special exhibitions, usually of loan material, were, however, held at the AGSA. Overall, at least seventy art competitions have been held as part of festivals, over half of them in the period of the 1980s and 1990s. About sixty were in country towns, and more than twenty of these in country towns in NSW.[130] An art competition was probably a useful component, because the exhibition could be open continuously and would be interesting to a high proportion of citizens. Sales would be encouraging for local artists, and commissions would be welcome to the organisers.

Particularly in remote areas, groups of art supporters within the community, as distinct from artists' societies, have begun art competitions as a way of stimulating interest in art. For example, the *Alice Prize* was begun in 1970 by a group which constituted itself into the Alice Springs Art Foundation, with the aim of keeping local residents abreast of contemporary art, and also of acquisition and sales. In 1989 it was handed over to the community and was based in the new Araluen Art Centre. It has had good judges and sponsors, and now offers a purchase prize of $5,000 plus a four week residency. Because of the number of entries which are received, fifty to sixty are now pre-selected by a panel.[131] The *South Perth Society of Art and Craft Heritage Exhibition* is a suburban competition which has been held annually since 1977 and now offers a total of $2,000 in prizes for several categories of entries. It is open to Western Australian artists only.[132]

In some cases, art shows intended mainly for local amateurs have been held by groups within a community which had no other links with art, primarily in order to raise funds. An example is the *Red Cross Art Exhibition* in Currabubula, a small town in northern NSW with an advertised population of 180.[133] The *Exhibition* was begun as an adjunct to a charity flower show, and was immediately successful both financially and in the number of entries it attracted.[134] Of the 270 entries in the first exhibition, thirty were sold. In 1976 there were almost 700 entries, of which over 140 were sold, and in 1977 over 2,500 people visited the exhibition. By 1985 over $128,000 had been collected for the Red Cross. The organisers are clearly efficient fund-raisers, but they are sensitive to the views of artists on matter such as judging.[135] Another kind of charitable purpose was illustrated by the *Robin Hood Committee Art Prize*, which ran between 1956 and 1979, beginning in Melbourne and later moving to Sydney. It had an open section, and also sections for the work of prisoners and psychiatric patients. With the help of generous sponsorship, it made money from sales and entrance fees, and at the same time gave publicity to the work of disadvantaged artists.[136]

A number of social clubs of varying complexions have made themselves patrons of art competitions for differing reasons. The Yorick Club had been founded in Melbourne in 1868 as a social club with a membership

which included artists, lawyers and businessmen, and it prided itself on its somewhat Bohemian reputation. In 1949 it offered a literary prize, and in 1953 celebrated its 85th anniversary with the *Yorick Art Prize*, an acquisitive prize of 50 guineas for a painting, which was continued for some twelve years. The Club held an exhibition and sale in its rooms.[138] The Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club in Sydney, had a more specific idea of the purpose of the *Award* which it offered from 1972 to about 1988. It was organised by members who were interested in art, as a way of raising funds for sailing in overseas events. There were about fifty entries on the first occasion and all were hung. Subsequently numbers were limited, and the prize was increased and became acquisitive. In its final year in 1988, the prize had risen to $2,000. The entries had to have a nautical theme, and the winning paintings were used to adorn the Club's walls.[138] The Sydney Journalists Club had a more direct interest in the prizes (totalling £400) which it offered in 1957 and 1958 for black and white works intended for newspaper publication, and also for colour illustrations for magazine publication.

Several Rotary clubs and other service clubs were astute in recognising the art competition as a useful combination of fund raising opportunities and service to the arts. The Camberwell Rotary Club in Melbourne held its first competition in 1963 and it still continues to run it successfully. The original aims, which were to sell works, to raise funds and to provide artists with a market place, have also presumably been considered successful. The Club claims that a third of the entries come from other states, that over a third of them are sold, and that public interest and attendance are at high levels.[139] The competition is open to all artists, but entries are limited to traditional realist art. In spite of this success, the only other Rotary Clubs to capitalise on this form of fund raising during the second phase seem to have been the Port Hedland Rotary Club, with its *Spinifex Spree* offering a prize of $750 in 1975, and the Rockhampton Club, which offered a total of $1,200 in prizes in 1971. The Kempsey Quota Club also held an art exhibition for traditional landscape in 1972.

In some cases sponsors have held art competitions to commemorate a person or an event. As was the case during the first phase of competitions, the most common are those which mark an anniversary, for which the creation of a painting or sculpture seems to have been regarded as a suitable commemorative gesture. Examples include the

major *Captain Cook Bicentenary Celebration Competition* which was held in NSW, Victoria and Queensland in 1970. In each State awards were offered by bodies such as the public Art Gallery, the Gallery society, or a newspaper, for painting and/or sculpture, in some cases with a specified theme. The Victorian Arts Centre held a competition for a fountain to commemorate the Bicentenary of Matthew Flinders in 1975. The Tasmanian Sesquicentenary was celebrated with an art prize in 1954, and the Brisbane Centennial and the Queensland Centenary were both celebrated with an art prize in 1959. The versatility of the art prize was also demonstrated by its use to draw attention to a variety of business and social occasions. The International Congress of Accountants, for example, organised a competitive landscape art exhibition with a prize of $2,500 to honour the holding of its Tenth Congress in Australia in 1972, and the Victorian Trades Union offered prizes to mark May Day between 1954 and 1958.[140] Art Prizes have also been used to commemorate individuals - the *William Angliss Memorial Prize* resulted in the acquisition of the prize-winning works, which were presented to the NGV.

To a certain degree these disparate sponsors, including festivals, have complemented the activities of local artists' societies, local galleries and local government organisations. In many cases, they have been aimed at amateurs. Some such as the *Alice Prize* and the *Robin Hood Prize* had a specific purpose which benefited certain groups of artists. For most of them, however, fund raising or acquisition was the chief purpose, and for this reason, their emphasis was probably on the individual art object at least as much as on the artist. Their chief benefit for artists was that they supported local artists, usually amateurs, and that they promoted the idea of sales. They also offered the community an easy introduction to works of art.

Observations

During this period the art competition, in its various permutations, became accepted as part of the art scene. It also came to be regarded as a device which could be used, and to some extent manipulated, by a variety of organisers acting as sponsors, who stood to benefit from it in some way. The phenomenon of commercial sponsorship was quickly established. Competitions offered artists a possibility of professional recognition in different centres or locally, but at a significant cost in terms of transport and time, and of uncertainty in relation to the

idiosyncrasies of judging. Competitions offered the public new ways of viewing, comparing and assessing art objects.

ENDNOTES

1 CAS, Victoria, Minutes of Meeting of the Council, 29 Nov. 1963.

2 CAS, Victoria, *Annual Report*, 1965.

3 CAS NSW *Broadsheet* Aug. 1962, p. 1.

4 CAS NSW *Broadsheet* May 1974, p. 7.

5 Dean Bruton, *Contemporary Art Society of S. A. 1942-86, Recollections*, CAS, Adelaide, nd, p. 16.

6 Print Council of Australia, Minutes of meetings, 23 Oct. 1965; ibid. 13 Dec. 1966; ibid. 23 Nov. 1966.

7 Print Council Secretary's Reports, year ended 31 Dec. 1969, and year ended 31 Dec, 1973, *Imprint* no.3, 1967.

8 Print Council, Report of General Annual Meeting, 18 Apr. 1974, *Imprint* no. 1. 1973.

9 *Wildlife Art Society of Australasia Newsletter*, vol. 18, no. 2, June 1994.

10 Survey of Competitions, 1997.

11 ibid. The Society has now been able to acquire its own accommodation which is used for classes and workshops.

12 *The History of the Grafton Regional Gallery*, Grafton Regional Gallery Volunteers Package, nd. In 1988 the Society changed the competition to an acquisitive prize for drawing, which attracts a range of entries of high quality from all over Australia, and is creating a significant specialist collection in the Grafton Regional Gallery. See Survey of Competitions, 1997.

13 The same group successfully lobbied for the establishment of an art gallery as a bicentennial project, and the resulting purpose-built Campbelltown Bicentennial Gallery is now administered by the Council.

14 Stella Curran, *Sun, Sea and Shadows: the Redcliffe Art Contest and Art Society 1957 to 1996*, Curran, Scarborough, 1998, pp. 66, 83, 86. The Council provided accommodation for the exhibitions and also financial support, although there were other sponsors. The Competition was widened to include sculpture and ceramics, and the Society extended its activities to include seminars and lessons. The part played by the Society in running the Competition seems finally to have ended in 1996, because of a combination of factors which included increasing competition for the competition itself from others now being held in Queensland, the death or retirement of veteran members, and some differences with the Council about the method of selecting the works which it was to acquire. It had, however, developed and maintained interest in art over a long period, and had been a valuable resource for Redcliffe.

15 Survey of Competitions, 1997.

16 ibid.

17 *Martin Hanson Prospectus 1997*. The competition has retained its memorial character, even after the transfer of its administration in 1996 to the Gladstone Regional Art Gallery and Museum which had been established some ten years earlier.

18 *Report of the Trustees of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, for the year ending 30 June 1950*, Perth 1950. ibid, 1951 to 1954.

19 *Perth Prize for Contemporary Art 1954* [Catalogue]. Both the *Perth Prize* and the *Perth Prize for Contemporary Art* were begun during the period when the Gallery was administered as part of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of WA. In 1954 the *Prize for Contemporary Art* attracted 254 entries, sixty-nine of which were from other states.

20 Dr Ursula Hoff, 'Perth Art Prize', *A and A*, vol.3, no. 2, Sep. 1965, p. 107.

21 Jana Gooding, 'The Perth Prize for Drawing - a Review' [Catalogue]. AGWA, Perth, 1988.

22 AGNSW TM, 4 May 1954.

23 ibid. 9 Dec 1966. The Prize was received in 1966. (AGNSW TM 9 Dec. 1966). A report on the 1974 award was that ten entries had been received, and that the standard was not high. (ibid. 13 Dec. 1974).

24 ibid. 20 Jan. 1967.

25 ibid. 26 Feb. 1965.

26 ibid. 18 Dec. 1959; ibid. 26 Feb. 1960.

27 *Art Gallery of NSW Act*, No 1, 1958.

28 AGNSW TM, 26 Mar. 1976.

29 The *H. C. Richards Prize* of 100 guineas was originally for landscape, but later became the *Trustees' Prize* for painting in general. In 1978 the *Prize* was replaced by the purchase of works for the Gallery. See Catalogue of selected entries, *Trustees purchase Exhibition*, 1978; *Andrew and Lilian Pedersen Memorial Prize for Drawing*, 1978. The *L.J. Harvey Prize* was increased to $500 in 1973, and in 1976 was taken over by the Trustees. In 1987 the basis of the awards changed. Entry was by invitation, and awards were made on the basis of "special needs directed" prizes which were designed to make the optimum use for the Gallery of its decreasing funds. Gallery files recorded the cost to the Gallery of administering open competitions. See QAG File - Pedersen Correspondence, 1994.

30 Ivor Francis, 'Bequest becomes a farce', *Advertiser*, 29 Dec. 1976, p. 25.

31 David Thomas, 'The Maude Vizard Wholohan Purchase Award', [Catalogue]. AGSA, 1980.

32 'Art Competitions and Prizes debated', *SMH*, 19 July 1957, p. 3.

33 Our Art Critic, 'No surprise choice for Art Awards', *SMH*, 22 Jan. 1955, p. 2; Our Art Critic ' Fine Archibald entries not shown to Public', *SMH*, 24 Jan 1950, p. 2; Charles Lloyd Jones, 'An Art Gallery Trustee in defence of the Trust', *SMH*, 1 Feb. 1950.

34 Robert Hughes, '*The Archibald Prize, A strong unfinished work*', *Observer*, 2 Dec. 1958, p 724.

35 Alan McCulloch, 'The 1958 Archibald Award', *Meanjin*, no 71, vol. xvii, no. 1, 1959; 'The Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Awards for 1961', *Meanjin*, no. 88, vol. xxi, no. 1, 1962, p. 91.

36 David Rankin, 'A Prize that perpetuates outmoded ideas about art', *National Times*, 22-27 Feb. 1971.

37 Bernard Boles, 'Chatting with a P plate beaurocrat: the Archibald's hanging judge', *Nation Review*, 25 Jan. 1974, p. 468.

38 Hal Missingham, *They kill you in the end*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1973, pp. 82, 83.

39 Daniel Thomas, 'Patronage of the Visual Arts in Australia, 1970-71', an address at the Annual Conference of the Art Galleries Association of Australia, 23-25 Feb. 1971, in *Art Galleries Association of Australia Bulletin, 1972-74*, AGNSW, Sydney, 1974, pp. 3 ff.

40 The Broken Hill Gallery was established in 1904, and a new gallery, funded by the Council, was opened in 1970 (*Broken Hill Art Gallery Bicentennial Catalogue 1904-1988*, p. 4). The competition which began in 1953 was replaced in 1993 by the acquisitive *Outback Art Prize* of $5,000 for works on paper, which has helped the Gallery to develop exhibitions, although the medium of the print has not proved popular (Survey of Competitions, 1997). Lismore Arts Trust, established in 1953, began an annual acquisitive *Lismore Art Prize* to develop the municipal collection. In the following year the Lismore City Art Gallery was opened and was managed by the Trust as a sub-committee of the Council. It continued to receive works, mainly from emerging artists, through the prize until about 1982, when the competition was changed to a purchase exhibition.

41 The 1995 *Bathurst Art Purchase, celebrating 40 years of the permanent collection*, 1995.

42 *27th Bathurst Art Purchase, 1991.* [Catalogue].

43 The Annual Exhibition was renamed the *City of Newcastle Art Prize* in 1987, and not long afterwards became an invitation art purchase exhibition. The Gallery also offered other specialised awards such as the *Peter Sparks Memorial Pastel Award* and the *Reg Russum Drawing Prize* in 1995, and in 1997 it announced a biannual *National Ceramic Purchase Award*, intended to add to its permanent collection. It also hosted the *Prime Television Invitation Acquisitive Painting Prize* from 1993, and received the prize winning works.

44 In Toowoomba the Art Society ran an annual acquisitive art competition which was administered by the Art Gallery from 1965 to about 1978. It was reconstituted as a biennial prize, also acquisitive, in 1996.

45 The *Prize* was organised by the local Rotary Club, and still continues with the help of a number of local sponsors.

46 There is a separate award for local artists. The *Prize* continues, with some changes of title, and is now part of the Townsville International Arts Festival, offering an open prize of $1,000. Survey of Competitions, 1997.

47 Survey of Competitions, 1997.

48 '*Key Works, Gold Coast Art Prize Acquisitions, 1968-1988*'[Catalogue]. The Gallery, 1989, p. 4.

49 Lynne Seear, *Strategies for a collection, The Gold Coast Art Prize*, B. A. Hons. Thesis, Department of Art History, University of Queensland, July 1987.

50 The Gallery has to some extent planned the competition in relation to its needs - there was a *Works on Paper Art Prize* in 1987, an *Invitation Art Prize* directed at younger artists in 1988, and in 1993 the *Prize* was for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Art. There is also a long running *National Ceramic Award* and a *Sculpture Award.*

51 '*Benalla Art Gallery: The first Twenty Years - 1968-1988*'. The Gallery, 1988.

52 Shepparton Art Gallery Papers, Folder, *Fairley Art Prize*, 1967.

53 Shepparton Art Gallery Papers, Folder, untitled.

54 Watercolour and Print sections were added later. The *Sidney Myer Fund International Ceramics Award* continues. The Gallery's specialisation attracted other additions to its collections - the Mayfair Collection which was presented to it in 1986 (Folder, Mayfair Collection 17 Nov. 1986), and the award winners in the *Commonwealth Bank National Award* which were transferred to it on an indefinite basis in 1992.

55 Ernst van Hattum, 'Preface', *Catalogue of the Mildara Prize for Sculpture*, 1961, p. 7.

56 Joseph Burke, 'Tradition and innovation in Western Sculpture', in *Catalogue of the Mildara Prize*, 1961.

57 Daniel Thomas, 'Mildura Sculpture Triennial', *A and A*, vol. 8, no. 1, June 1970, p. 51.

58 The first *Australian Sculpture Triennial* was held at La Trobe University, Melbourne in 1981, under the Directorship of Tom McCullough, and with support from the Victorian Government and funding from the Visual Arts Board and other arts bodies. It was an ambitious operation, with the exhibits categorised into four main sections. Four more *Australian Sculpture Triennials* were held in Melbourne, the last in 1993. They seem to have become increasingly complex and also increasingly dispersed, the last being on some twenty-six sites throughout Melbourne. An element of competition was inherent - for example, in the 1984 *Triennial* the number of entries to be exhibited was strictly limited. In the 1990 *Triennial* twenty four artists were invited to submit maquettes and eight of these were reproduced to full size by the organisers.

59 In 1996 funds available for acquisition totalled $8,000. The Art Centre also hosted a Craft Event supported by several sponsors.

60 Templeman Interview, 1998.

61 Annette Davis, 'Fremantle Print Award Retrospective', *Imprint*, vol. 30, no. 3, Spring 1995, p. 17.

62 The *Prize* was followed in 1987 by the South West Survey, based in the Gallery and sponsored by local firms, which offered prizes, and provided a representative exhibition of work in the area. A *Bunbury Biennale* was begun in 1993. See Survey of competitions 1997.

63 Elwyn Lynn, 'Modern art in Australia', *Hemisphere*, vol. XI, no. 9, Sep. 1967, p. 4.

64 Elwyn Lynn, 'Art with a Prize on its head, value, suspicion and debate', *Bulletin*, 16 Nov. 1968, p. 83.

65 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ART COMPETITIONS IN SYDNEY SUBURBS:
1952-55 *Parramatta Art Prize.* 250 gns
1955-76 *Rockdale Art Prize.* Acquisitive in early years. Traditional and contemporary oil each 80 gns; Traditional and contemporary watercolour each 50 gns. Finally $250 and $ 125 respectively.
1956 *Concord Council Art Prize.*
1957-1996 *Warringah Art Prize.* Acquisitive after 1976. Total prizes 1957 £70, including 40 gns open.
1957-1983 *Hunters Hill Art Prize.* 1957 total 140 gns. 1983 open $1,000.
1967 *Woollahra Municipal Council Art Exhibition.* $600 traditional portrait or still life; $200 abstract or modern.
1970-75 *Liverpool City Council Art Competition* (later *Liverpool Prize for Art*). Acquisitive. $1,000 oil; watercolour and sculpture added 1972.
1975
1975-76 *Leichhardt Municipal Art Exhibition.* $300 traditional painting, $300 contemporary ; $134 local artists.

66 Rockdale Council, Minutes of Meeting of the Cultural Activities and Community Services Committee, 15 Nov. 1954.

67 Philip Geeves and James Jarvis, *Rockdale: its beginning and development.* Rockdale Council, Sydney, 1954.

68 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ART COMPETITIONS IN COUNTRY NSW:
1953- c 1982 *Lismore Art Prize.* 1956 50 gns; 1970 $500 open, $100 Trad., $100 Contemp.
1954-71 *Taree Art Prize.* Oils 100 gns, Watercolour 25 gns; 1957 purchase total £165; 1970 purchase to $330; 1991 purchase $1,250 and $1,000.

1956-1981 *Wollongong Art Prize.* Acquisitive for future gallery. $500. Purchase after 1973 - c$1,200. See Prospectus, 1973.
1957- *Maitland Prize.* Acquisitive. 100 gns, 1957. $5,000 1998.
1958-c1996 *Muswellbrook Art Prize.* Acquisitive. 1958 £100 open and £25 for local painter. Total prizes 1996 about $12,500, including sponsorship of $10,000 by Costain Australia and $1,250 by Council See *Art Monthly* April 91, p. 18.
1962-65 *Katoomba Art Prize.* £250 in 1962.
1962- c1981 *Sutherland Shire Council Art Competition.* Acquisitive. 1991 $1,600 and $8,000 towards purchase.
1967 *Manilla Art Festival.* $150.
1970-c76 *Gosford Shire Art Prize.* Acquisitive. Oil $800, watercolour $300.
1975-c1981 *Camden Municipal Annual Art Festival.* Acquisitive. 1975 open $600, Traditional Landscape $200, Portrait $100.

69 *Maitland Prize Prospectus* 1957.

70 Gill Interview, 1999. The *Prize* became biennial in about 1989. The Director noted that, although the *Prize* was originally roughly equivalent to the value of the work, this is no longer so. Clearly, artists have this in mind when they decide to enter, and they may be influenced by the fact that no commission has to be paid on the acquisition. Winners are usually artists who are successful in other contests around the country. There is now substantial commercial sponsorship. Bengalla Mining gives an open acquisitive prize of $6,000 and other non-acquisitive prizes, including two of $1,000 for local artists. The Council contributes a $2,500 acquisitive prize for works on paper. There is also a $1,000 national ceramic award. Another project based in the Gallery is a national photographic award which is sponsored by the community. (Prospectus 1997).

71 *Shire of Diamond Valley Art Prize Catalogue*, 1993.

72 Survey of competitions, 1997.

73 Ibid.

74 'Rubinstein gives art scholarship', *SMH*, 10 April 1957, p. 17.

75 AGNSW TM, 29 Sep. 1961.

76 Missingham, although Director of the Gallery, was a free spirit whose views often differed from those of the Trustees. The selection of artists such as John Passmore, who had already travelled overseas, rather than untravelled young artists was publicly questioned by writer Patrick White, but defended by Schurek, representing the Scholarship, on the grounds that the award went to an artist who had shown determination to go on and improve his work. (Patrick White, 'Art scholarship - Terms should be clarified, otherwise just another art prize', *SMH*, 21 Sep. 1959, p. 2; N. Schurek, 'Art scholarship aim defended', *SMH*, 22 Sep. 1959, p. 5. The *Portrait Prize* was offered annually between 1960 and 1966, with a prize of £300.

77 *Helena Rubinstein Travelling Art Scholarship Catalogue* 1960-61.

78 The award is administered by the conservative Twenty Melbourne Painters Society, of which Alice Bale was a foundation member. It currently offers $30,000 for travel, plus some additional cash, and is based on an individually structured program of training and visits for the winners.

79 AGNSW TM, 21 Mar. 1980.

80 Eighty three entries were received for the first award and an unusually high number of 262 in 1997, showing that there is real interest in the *Prize.* On several occasions seminars held in conjunction with the exhibition have provided entrants and other women painters with an opportunity to assess competitions and the implications of the *Portia Geach Prize* in particular.

81 Ian North, 'Prizes by the score in painting', *News*, W. A., 3 Mar. 1972.

82 *A New approach to textile designing by a group of Australian artists*, was published by Ure Smith in Sydney in 1947, and contained articles by the main operators, and illustrations of the designs submitted. Silk and Textile Printers had earlier employed the painter Desiderius Orban to train its textile designers. Professor Burke considered that the commissioned designs by William Dobell and James Gleeson were the most successful, and it is interesting that Dobell had in fact had some previous experience with textiles.

83 Joseph Burke, *The Post-war Years in Australian Art: some lessons for the future, the Sixth Sir William Dobell Memorial Lecture*, Sir William Dobell Art Foundation, Sydney, 1982, p. 21.

84 'One of these designs will win 300 guineas', *SMH*, 20 Sep. 1953, p. 27.

85 *Dunlop Art Contest* 1954, Catalogue.

86 Franz Philipp, 'The *Dunlop Art Contest*', *Meanjin*, no. 49, vol. xi, no. 2. Winter 1952, p. 148.

87 *Australian Women's Weekly Art Prize*, 1955, Catalogue.

88 *Australian Women's Weekly* 6 Apr. 1955, p 13. Other contemporary competitions in the magazine were for cookery, fashion, square dancing and road safety (the last with prizes of 8 Hillman Minx cars). (O'Brien 1982, 114). Winners of the *Portrait Prize* included artists of the calibre of J. Carington Smith, Charles Doutney, William Dobell, Albert Tucker and Judy Cassab.

89 An Art Critic, 'Display of portraits in contest', *SMH*, 17 Aug. 1956, p. 2.

90 D. O'Brien, *The Weekly*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1982, p. 114.

91 'Architecture and Sculpture, the COMALCO Invitation Award', *Aluminium*, no 4, 1971, COMALCO, Melbourne, 1971.

92 Steve Harris, 'Square art a stunner', *Age*, 12 Dec. 1978, p. 13.

93 Wendy Harmer, '"Yellow Peril" to go', *Sun*, 29 July 1980, p. 1.

94 Bill Birnbauer, 'Gallery Director backs sculpture', *Age*, 31 July 1980, p. 5.

95 '"Peril" submits to a Dentist's Drill', *Age*, 9 June 1981.

96 Minutes of Meeting of the Council of the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW, 23 Oct. 1956.

97 Minutes of Meeting of the Arts and Crafts Committee of the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW, 19 Mar. 1957.

98 *Annual Report of the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW*, No 30, 1960.

99 In 1958 Arthur Murch, a former *Archibald* winner, won the "Rural" division, and H. Flugelman and R. Fluke shared the "Industrial". Other entrants included Lloyd Rees and T. J. Santry. Convention seems to have been important - artist Sali Herman, judging the Still Life section in 1972, gave the $500 prize to Marion Farley's *Peaches*, valued at $175, in preference to John Brack's *The Drawing Table*, priced at $2,000.

100 AMPOL offered awards for different categories including industrial design, between 1965 and 1971; Esso offered awards to students in 1967; Caltex provided short term awards, presumably requested by other sponsors, in a number of towns from the 1950s onwards.

101 Our Art Critic, 'Outstanding entries for Art Prize', *SMH* ,30 Aug. 1961, p. 2.

102 'Painting "find" lands another big prize', *SMH*, 5 Nov. 1968, p. 5.

103 Belgiorno Nettis interview, 2 June 1998.

104 The first Director of the Gallery was Robert Haines. He left to become Assistant Director of the NGV, and was subsequently Director of the QAG.

105 K. Dunstan, *The Store on the Hill*, Georges Ltd., Melbourne, 1979, p. 153.

106 *Georges Invitation Art Awards* [Catalogue], 1970; ibid., 1971.

107 Susan McCulloch, 'Georges to close its gallery, drop prize', *Age*, 9 Mar. 1984, p. 14.

108 *Georges Invitation Art Awards*, [Catalogue], 1972.

109 ibid., 1964.

110 Travelodge 11th Annual Report of Directors, 1970, p 9. *Travelodge* winners included John Brack, Fraser Fair and David Aspden. The acquisitive *Parmelia Prize*, established by the Parmelia Hotel and worth $1,200, was considered a milestone because it was the first portrait competition in Western Australia. It was first offered in 1976, and continued for a few years. Toohey's *Paint-Pub Prize* was sponsored by the brewery between 1976 and 1981. It was an acquisitive prize of about $4,000, with separate sections for traditional and modern paintings of Pubs in the landscape, and People in pubs. It seems likely that there might have been a limited market for those entries which were not successful. The *Ryecroft Prize*, offered by Ryecroft Vineyards in South Australia, was a biennial purchase prize and selling exhibition for invited artists, with a purchase fund of about $5,000.

111 The *Mayfair Ceramic Award* was sponsored between 1976 and 1986 by the firm of Mayfair Hams and Bacon, which was interested in promoting some form of craft. It formed a collection based on acquisitions. By 1984 the standards of the competition were falling, and it was changed to a contest between invited competitors chosen to represent current trends. The competition ended when Mayfair went into liquidation in 1986. The Crafts Board of the Australia Council eventually purchased the collection and transferred it to the Shepparton Gallery (Shepparton Art Gallery Papers, Folder, Mayfair Collection, 17 Nov. 1986).

An *Australian Welding Institute Sculpture Contest* was held in Sydney in 1974. Little information about it is available, but the title suggests that it was inspired by some kind of interaction between professional welders and sculptors such as Ron Robertson-Swann, for whose work welding techniques were crucial.

Other competitions were:
. The *NBN Channel 3 Art Prize*, with the Newcastle Art Gallery, 1968-9
. The *Australian-TAA National Art Award*, 1970
. The *L.J. O'Flynn Memorial Art Prize*, 1973 [horse-racing scenes]
. The *Tenth International Congress of Accountants Art Competition*, 1972 [landscape]
. *Young World Art Awards* 1973 [a national competition for children]
. *Capital Permanent Awards*, 1977-80, Geelong Art Gallery.
. *National Art Award for Secondary School Students*, 1979 (sponsored by BHP, The Commonwealth Banking Corporation and *The Australian*).

112 *The Peter Stuyvesant Cultural Foundation, 1964-1983*, The Foundation, Sydney, c 1983.

113 Chairman's Address, Rothman's of Pall Mall (Aust.), Ltd, 22 Sep. 1975.

114 Elwyn Lynn, 'Modern Art in Australia', *Hemisphere*, vol. XI, Sep. 1967, pp. 4, 5.

115 Terry Smith, 'Cultural backwardness is showing', *Nation Review*, 4-10 Dec. 1971, p. 252.

116 Daniel Thomas, 'Patronage of the Visual Arts in Australia', op. cit.

117 Survey of competitions, 1997.

118 Ibid.

119 It offered a prize of £500 in 1966, and seems to have been organised by a private group.

120 In fairness to Scott it should be mentioned that his acquisitions for the Newman College collection suggest that he was not necessarily opposed to abstraction, although he thought it unsuitable for didactic religious art. See Alison Inglis, 'Sounding the depths of Modernism, The Newman College Collection of Art', *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 63, Sep. 1993, p. 20.

121 Blake Minutes, 6 Aug. 1958.

122 Blake Minutes, 21 Mar. 1961.

123 *Blake Prize* 1970. [Catalogue]

124 *Blake Prize, 1973.* [Catalogue]

125 Dr Gertrude Langer, 'Religious Art To-day', *The Australian Church Quarterly*, July 1956, p. 18.

126 Donald Brook, 'What is religious art?' *SMH*, 26 Sep. 1968, p. 10.

127 Faye Roberts & C. Robert Horne, 'In search of a Legend, an Australian mining village's view of its past', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 4, June 1979, p. 71.

128 'Unique Providers, money raising and the University of NSW U Committee 1963-1993', The Oral History Project of the University of NSW, 1994, p. 28.

129 McCulloch 1994, p. 842. and See *Bulletin of the National Gallery of South Australia*, vol. 23, no. 4, serial no. 88, April, 1962; See *Adelaide Festival of the Arts, Mar. 12-26, 1960, Souvenir Programme, Special exhibition*; See *AGSA Festival Exhibitions 1972.* [Catalogue].

130 One of the earliest Victorian festival art competitions was the *Dandenong Youth Art Festival*, held first in 1955 and currently offering a total of $5,000 in prizes to artists under 26. Others were the *Bright Autumn Festival* $1,000 art competition and the *Kiwanis Club of Shepparton Art and Craft Exhibition.* NSW Festivals include the *Armidale Arts Festival*, which ran from the 1960s to the 1980s. In the 1960s it offered an *Esso Acquisitive Prize* for painting, and both traditional and contemporary winners received £150. Later there were prizes for painting, sculpture, fibre and drawing. The Festival proper was a week of performances, with a film festival and other art exhibitions. Examples of other festivals were the *Henry Lawson Festival* at Grenfell in the 1960s, the *Wyong Shire Festival of Arts*, run by Rotary from about 1980 to 1991, and sponsored by Transfield, with sections for traditional and abstract. It later became an invitation contest. Berinba had an *Arts Festival*, based in the public school, from the 1970s to the 1980s, again with prizes for "traditional" and "abstract" paintings ($300 each), and Young had a *Cherry Festival Art Prize* in the 1980s. An enduring event in NSW is the *Festival of Fisher's Ghost*, which began in 1963, and into which the local Art Society incorporated its art competition.

In Queensland, the first *Charleville Art Contest* was held in 1973 during the *Booga Woongaroo Festival*, with a non-acquisitive prize of $500, while the *Stanthorpe Arts Festival* which began in 1972, and was based in the Gallery, now offers $36,000 acquisition money for seven separate sections. South Australia had the *Barossa Valley Vintage Festival*, with prize money of $1,500, Tasmania had the *Blue Gum Festival* during the 1970s, with prize money up to $7,000 by 1976, and in the ACT the *Tuggeranong Community Festival* offered a $1,000 open art award in 1997.

131 Survey of competitions, 1997.

132 ibid.

133 'Portfolio, Currabubula Exhibition boosts Red Cross funds beyond expectation', *Australian Artist*, July 1985, vol. 2, no, 1, p. 4.

134 Syd. H. Ware, *"Carrabobbila": a book to ... record the history of Currabubula District*, Quirindi and District Historical Society, Quirindi, 1982, p. 152.

135 Survey of competitions, 1976.

136 Other examples of competitions which were primarily fund raisers were the *Southern Cross Art Exhibition* at Caringbah in NSW, which ran from the early 1970s to 1991, *St Albans Church of England Art Exhibition*, Sydney, in 1981, with a prize of $200, *Blue Waters* Exhibition, Lake Cargellico, begun in 1978 with a main prize of $200 which had risen to $1,250 in 1997 (Survey of Competitions, 1997) and the *Cardinia Art Show* at Pakenham in Victoria, in 1996. Dalby in Queensland had an *Art Prize* from 1970 to about 1980, and its prize of about $1,000 attracted some emerging painters. In WA, Army Art held an exhibition in 1996, with commission on sales going to charity, and the *Tresillian Art Award*, was first offered in 1990, to raise money for a community centre.

137 Joseph Johnson, *Laughter and the Love of friends, a History of the Melbourne Savage Club 1894-1994 and A History of the Yorick Club 1868-1966*, Savage Club, Melbourne, 1994, p. 166.

138 Survey of Competitions, 1976.

139 ibid.

140 Other awards included the *Armidale Centenary* in 1963, the *Bathurst Sesquicentenary Prize* of 350 guineas offered in 1965, and the *Leeton Irrigana Golden Jubilee Festival* which offered a total of about £500 in prizes in 1972. The Royal Aeronautical Society in Australia offered an art prize to celebrate its centenary year in 1966, and the RSSAILA Cronulla Sub Branch held a competition in 1965 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Gallipoli landing.

CHAPTER 4

THE THIRD PHASE OF ART COMPETITIONS

By the 1980s art competitions had become an established feature of the art scene, although in some cases a transient one. In order to attract attention to competitions and to maintain it, it was necessary for sponsors to develop a public profile which showed their importance and sophistication. It was also desirable to diversify them. In a situation where a number of organisations were becoming concerned with financial aspects of the arts, it was logical that the value of the prizes which were offered in competitions was now seen as one of the main indicators of their significance. Another was increasing specialisation in the nature of the competitions which were staged. Both these developments were to have the effect of creating a more obvious distinction between competitions intended for professionals and those for amateurs.

Competitions sonsored by artists

In general artists' societies were now holding fewer competitions and becoming less consistent in doing so, perhaps because it was difficult to meet the costs, and also because it was felt that the time had passed for this method of seeking recognition. Selling from exhibitions remained a major incentive, however, and artists in the more traditional artists' societies in Melbourne and Sydney continued to hold some sponsored competitions which were no doubt intended to promote sales, and also to stimulate the enthusiasm of members.

An indication of their attitudes to competition is given by the fact that in the 1980s the Council of the VAS discussed the matter of prizes in relation to the awards being offered by Rotary and other sponsors, and in particular questioned whether giving prizes was in fact the purpose of the Society. Their conclusion was that it was important that any awards which were given should have some meaning, and that perhaps it would be more desirable simply to give medallions rather than monetary prizes. The competitions themselves were, however, not discouraged, nor in fact were the prizes. As a way of encouraging sponsors to contribute without making excessive demands on them, the Council developed a scheme, which proved to be moderately successful, of inviting potential sponsors to contribute to the prize funds by taking

out sponsorship units of $1,000 each.[1] The Council also applied to the Ministry for the Arts for assistance, but without success. By the late 1980s, however, it had established a scheme of awards based on its four major annual exhibitions, and centering on the selection of the Artist of the Year by his/her peers. This award system, which applied to members only, still continues.

The CAS in Victoria has adopted the idea of awarding prizes at its annual exhibitions, and also at some members' exhibitions, and has done so continuously since 1973. Entries were judged by artists, and the major prize in 1984 was a modest $400. The Royal Art Society of NSW offered a special "*Works on paper" Bicentennial Competition* with a prize of $2,500. In the 1990s it has continued to give awards. For example, it gives a Will Ashton Medal at its Spring Exhibition, and offers a prize of $1,250 for the best painting in the Annual Autumn Exhibition in 1995. It now also offers a Medal of Distinction. The Royal Queensland Art Society also gave a medal, the Grumbacher Gold Medallion, at least in 1985 and 1987. In 1986 the CAS of South Australia offered an *Inaugural Drawing Prize* which does not seem to have been followed by others.

The primary purpose of these prizes seems to have been to maintain a friendly rivalry between members and to promote originality, rather than to adjudicate at a demanding professional level. Undoubtedly, they are also seen as offering some interest to visitors to the exhibitions. The competitions which are held, usually annually, by smaller local art societies throughout the country have continued to be important for members, since they provide a focus for the work of the society during the year, and can also draw attention to their work outside the immediate area. A number of the long-standing competitions have continued, and some new ones have begun. In Sydney suburbs, for example, the *Ryde Municipal Art Society Award* continued into the 1990s, and the Lidcombe Art Society, the Hornsby Art Society and the Drummoyne Municipal Art Society all began new prizes in the 1990s. There were several long-term survivors in country NSW, and some new ones. One of the latter is the specialist group, Community Printmakers of Murwillumbah, which began its award in 1990 for publicity purposes, but continued it more particularly to promote printmaking in the area, and as a stimulus for the interest and the work of regional artists.[2] In Queensland the *Redcliffe Art Prize*

ended its 60 years of existence in 1998, [3] and the *Townsville Art Prize* has survived, but with three name changes since it began in 1967. Several new prizes were offered by societies, including the specialised *Gold Coast Sculpture Award* in 1991, and the *Pacific Festival Ceramic Competition* in Townsville in 1996.

In Victoria the Sherbrooke Art Society began a sequence of awards named to commemorate famous painters in the 1990s, but there were few other awards. The Printmakers Association of Western Australia began offering annual print awards in the 1980s, originally with a specified theme (in 1991 it was *Urban Reality*), and in about 1996 they added to this an experimental print award for works which included innovative techniques. All prizes were acquisitive, and the awards were clearly intended to generate new ideas about the print. Some new awards were instituted by artists in country centres, including the *Rockingham Art Award* for painting, sculpture and drawing given by the Rockingham Arts and Crafts Council, and the *Northam Art Prize*, in the 1980s.[4] The Central Australian Art Society began two new competitions in Alice Springs early in the 1990s - the *Northern Territory Art Award*, and the *Centralian Advocate Art Award*. The first offered a prize of $1,000 for work by permanent residents of the Northern Territory, and the second offered a first prize of $500 for residents of the area around Alice Springs.

It is clear that regular selling exhibitions have been used to provide the main professional and social focus for members of these societies. They have also helped to create interest in the work of members, and have provided a social occasion for members of the public.

Competitions held in State public galleries

For the State public galleries in particular, this phase brought some gifts from members of the public which were less prescriptive than those in the earlier phases, and these were used to provide new or more specialised kinds of competitions.

For the AGNSW it was a new era in the administration of the Wynne, Archibald and Sulman prizes. Because of their popularity in the exhibition program of the Gallery, it is useful to consider these three prizes first. Early in the 1980s three important catalysts occurred which affected their administration by the Gallery. The first was the

coming into force of the new *Art Gallery of New South Wales Act, 1980,* which not only reduced the number of Trustees and limited their time in office, but strengthened the position of the Director, who had until then functioned in a relatively subordinate role. [5] In effect it created a new Board which was likely to have a more flexible outlook than its predecessors, and which was much occupied with commercial considerations. In the same year the Gallery lost the revenue which it had been receiving from admission charges, a loss which was not made good by provision of additional government funds. It was therefore at a financial disadvantage compared with previous years, so that potential sources of revenue, such as popular exhibitions, became particularly important. The third catalyst appeared in 1985, when the *Archibald Prize* was reassessed by Archibald's Trustees under the terms of his Will in order to judge whether it was worthy of becoming perpetual. Their decision was that it was a good charitable trust, and worthy of continuance. This reassuring result must have increased the confidence of the AGNSW in its handling, and indeed its exploitation, of the prize. Attendances at the exhibitions were, however, not always up to expectations, and a *People's Choice Prize* was initiated in 1988 as a way of stimulating popular interest.

At least as early as 1976 Trustees had been concerned at the declining value of the three prizes, and in 1976 they decided to supplement them from their own funds. In 1981 they accepted the suggestion of their Finance Sub-Committee that commercial sponsorship should be obtained and that prize money should be reviewed on this basis.[6] Negotiations with a potential sponsor were unsuccessful, but from 1981 onwards the prizes were sponsored successively by the business enterprises Katies, Grace Bros., the State Bank of NSW and Colonial Mutual, in order to maintain the relative value of the prizes and to attract entries. Naturally this meant that in return sponsors expected to receive publicity, and some special functions were arranged for this purpose.[7] Also, Katies was nominated for a *Mobil Business for the Arts Award.* Media publicity was catered for by the dramatic ritual of the announcement of the results of the judging at 12 noon on judgement day.[8] In 1990, for the first time, viewers had to pay to see the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman exhibitions, and attendances and revenue were carefully monitored.[9] A commercial aura now surrounded the handling of the three competitions. The importance of this mercenary approach was emphasised in a favourable review of the

Gallery's operations as a whole in 1991 by the management experts Coopers and Lybrand, which commented on ways of increasing revenue, and noted that the timing of the three prizes and their exhibitions needed to be carefully planned in relation to the Biennale of Sydney. Edmund Capon, Director of the AGNSW, described the *Archibald Prize* in his speech at the opening in 1994 as 'such a big... and such a successful prize". He did not explain whether he rated its success in terms of public relations or of artistic standards.[10]

The basis for judging had now changed significantly from the early years when Archibald's Will was read to the Trustees to remind them of their objective of finding the best portrait. Judging might have become more cavalier or more adventurous, but it is questionable whether a clearer conception of what the prizes are intended to achieve in artistic terms had been developed. When the Trustees decided to give no prize for 1980, the critic Brian Hoad pointed out that painters whose work had been rejected should perhaps accept the situation that competitions and art are not compatible, and that the Archibald was neither a show place for the best artists nor an arena where the young could compete.[11]

The primary elements of the "Mission" of the Gallery are to "acquire, collect and present to the public the finest works of art available, to explore and inspire ... the emotional and intellectual resources of its audiences, and to develop the means ... to fulfil such a mission."[12] While the administration of the *Archibald*, *Wynne* and *Sulman* Prizes does not appear to contribute directly to the achievement of these aims, it does provide viewers with exhibitions of works which interest them, and which they feel able to assess critically on the basis of their own judgement, as distinct from that of the Trustees in their capacity as judges. The Gallery attempts to meet one aspect of its mission by providing guided tours of the exhibitions, and it is significant that guided tours on a commercial basis were offered by an external operator in 2000.

Another innovation in 2000, and one which is a significant comment on perceptions of the *Archibald Prize*, was the *2000 Sporting Portrait Prize*, a once-only award of $20,000 sponsored by the *Daily Telegraph*. This was presented as an Olympic gesture, and as a symbol of the paper's "whole-hearted commitment to sport and the arts". It was

light-heartedly acknowledged by Edmund Capon, Director of the AGNSW, as a complement to the Gallery's "own great annual circus, the *Archibald Prize*".[13] The conditions required that the portrait be of a person distinguished in sport, and painted from life, and interest centered unmistakably on the sporting personalities rather than the painting. The winner was chosen by a panel consisting of TV personalities H. G. Nelson, Roy Slaven and Edmund Capon and was won by a realist portrait of footballer Ron Barassi.

The administration of the *Sulman, McCaughey, Gruner, Pring* and *Brereton Prizes* and the *Trustees Watercolour Prize* continued without much change during this phase, except that in each case the prize money was topped up from time to time by the Trustees to maintain relativity with other awards. Enthusiasm seemed to be waning, however. For example, the Trustees asked for advice as to whether McCaughey income could be used for an acquisitive prize, and they noted in 1989 that more publicity was needed for the *Gruner Prize.* [14] The Gallery had, of course, to meet the costs of administering these prizes, and it was therefore reasonable that it should recoup some of its expenses from visits and sales.[15]

In 1993 the Sir William Dobell Art Foundation established the *Dobell Prize for Drawing*, to encourage excellence in drawing and draughtsmanship, and to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Foundation. It was an acquisitive prize, and was run by the AGNSW. The inaugural award had the distinction of being one of the rare occasions when Arthur Boyd acted as a judge. [16] Since it was complementary in terms of its medium to the *Wynne, Archibald* and *Sulman Prizes* it could be shown effectively at the same time as their exhibitions. During this phase, the AGNSW also assumed responsibility for administering the *Moya Dyring Scholarship* providing use of a studio in Paris, and it continued to administer the *Dyason Bequest* and the Basil and *Muriel Hooper Scholarships.*

Those sponsors whose benefactions were administered by the Gallery benefited in several ways. There was the assurance of permanency and the prestige which was provided by the institution. The competitions concerned were well publicised through the media and in the Gallery's own publications. There was also the significant practical advantage that the whole amount of the benefaction went into the prize, rather than into administrative expenses, and that when prize money lost its

value the Gallery would almost certainly arrange to top it up. The fact that judging, whether by Trustees or their nominees, was quite likely to be conservative or even eccentric, had to be accepted by artists as the price of getting good exposure for their work if it was hung in one of the Gallery's exhibitions.

The first involvement of the new Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney with an art competition was its hosting of the *Seppelt Contemporary Art Award* in 1997. The audience targetted was presumably the Museum's relatively affluent clientele, 50% of which has an annual income over $50,000, while 67% is in professional management occupations.[17] Its then Director, Bernice Murphy, said that, having resisted earlier proposals, the MCA had agreed to take on the *Seppelt Award* because the sponsor accepted an approach to patronage which did not centre on winners and losers. It was in fact democratic, at least in its preliminary selection stage. For the inaugural award in 1997 the public was invited to nominate artists from Australia and New Zealand on the basis of their work over the preceding two years. There were over 1,100 nominations. From these a panel selected five finalists, each of whom received an award of $15,000.[18] A nominal winner, announced later, was Susan Norrie (winner of the inaugural *Moët & Chandon Fellowship* in 1987), who was presented with a specially designed brooch.[19] The work of the finalists was displayed at the Museum, which arranged talks by artists and critics, and an explanatory catalogue.

Adjudication of the 1999 award was a more complex process. Curators, critics and writers nominated almost 200 artists. Their work was considered by the jury which selected nine practitioners in the categories of Environmental Design, Object Design and Visual Art, taking account of innovation in general and innovation within the artists' own work. Again there was a catalogue with commissioned essays, and talks by the finalists, and with emphasis on work "at the cutting edge". Postponing the selection of the winner until the end of the show presumably allowed some assessment of public opinion, and had the effect of prolonging public interest. On both occasions, the public was presented with a curated selection of works which represented only a minute proportion of the ideas which had originally been submitted. As one commentator pointed out, however, it could be seen as promoting discussion of contemporary developments by

avoiding the drama of winners and losers.[20] As far as the sponsors were concerned, in addition to the kudos of having given the prize itself, there were opportunities for practical advertising at weekend wine tastings.

The veteran *John McCaughey Memorial Prize* for a painting showing an aspect of Australian life continued to be awarded in the NGV, but new sponsorships added three innovative awards to the responsibilities of the Gallery. The first of these was the *Clemenger Triennial Award for Contemporary Australian Art.* It had its genesis in 1991 with a donation from Joan and Peter Clemenger (the latter the head of a major advertising company) to the NGV for the benefit of the Arts. It was decided to use this gift for a triennial exhibition of the best in Australian art in all media, to be presented at the NGV over the next twenty years, and marked on each occasion by an award of $30,000 in recognition of the outstanding achievement of one individual.[21] As critic Robert Rooney pointed out, this apparently represented an attempt to counter the preference given to artists thirty-five and under in awards such as the *Moët & Chandon*, with the result that it attracted a very mixed bag of art, and created the interesting situation of senior artists rubbing shoulders with mid-careerists. He suggested that it had been called the compassion prize.[22] The first exhibition in 1993 covered the work of some twenty artists chosen by James Mollison, Director of the NGV, and was awarded to Bea Maddock, who subsequently dedicated her large suite of paintings *Terra Spiritus with a darker shade of pale* to the Clemenger Award, which had made it possible for her to carry out a project of this magnitude. Richard Larter, winner of the award in 1996, was also highly appreciative, in particular because there was probably no other award for older artists.[23] The 1999 exhibition was held at the Museum of Modern Art at Heide in association with the NGV, which was undergoing extensive rebuilding. It included the work of ten artists, and was won by John Nixon, a decision which drew some suggestions of bias on the part of the judges.[24] Be that as it may, the exhibition presents significant works by each artist, and it does provide an overview of work by artists at this level.

The second major new competition hosted by the NGV was the *Cicely and Colin Rigg Craft Award*, at $30,000 the richest craft prize in Australia. It was based on a bequest from benefactors who had strong

links with the Gallery - Colin Rigg as a Trustee of the Felton Bequest Committee, and Cecily Rigg through her keen interest in art in Victoria. The Will seems to have made no specific provision as to the use of the bequest, and the Trustees decided, presumably on the advice of the Director, James Mollison, to devote it to contemporary craft. The first award in 1994 was for Victorian ceramics. The procedure followed was that the Gallery called for expressions of interest, from which a panel of artists and curators selected about twenty artists, differing widely in age and background, to be exhibitors. One judge selected the winner from these.[25] The second award, in 1997, was for metalwork, excluding jewellery, and on this occasion, there was an additional step in the selection process. A variety of art institutions were asked to recommend metal workers as potential competitors. On this basis, invitations to submit expressions of interest were sent out, and again twenty finalists selected from these by curators were invited to submit objects. These were judged by one judge.[26]

These awards demonstrate the benefit of working either with living donors, or on the basis of a benefaction without rigid constraints. Both allowed the Gallery to plan the competition in the context of the current art situation and of its own holdings and program, and also of its own conception of standards of display. Both created spectacular exhibitions which were presented in a scholarly way with excellent catalogues, relating the metal-work in particular to the history of this craft in Victoria, and with a program of talks by artists as well as curators. It is noticeable that the NGV in its *Annual Report* makes relatively low key references to the exhibitions and the winners, presenting them as part of an account of all exhibitions during the year, an approach which contrasts with the greater prominence given in the *Annual Report* of the AGNSW to the competitions which it administers.

The other major competition to be based in the NGV in the 1990s was *Contempora5*, which was actually held before the two already mentioned. It was rare among art prizes in being an initiative of a State Government, and it represented a special interest of Jeff Kennett, who was then both Premier and Minister for the Arts. The thrust of his interest was indicated by his statement when launching it that it would change how Australians thought about contemporary art, and that the art would be challenging, and even controversial.[27] He claimed that it

would be the richest art award in Australia. [28] In fact, with a prize of $100,000 every second year, the award could hardly be considered higher than the biennial *Doug Moran Prize* of $100,000 and the *Moët & Chandon* annual award of $50,000 plus a year's support in France and a grant of $50,000 to an art institution in Australia. It could, however, undoubtedly be claimed to be the highest government contribution to an arts prize in Australia. The total budget of about $270,000 was funded from the Community Support Fund, which is derived from gambling revenue. There was much public criticism of this expenditure, which some commentators felt could have been better applied in other ways for the arts, or for the community in general. The Premier had hoped for commercial support in providing the award, and this was in fact provided by the international telecommunications firm Ericsson Australia, which agreed to contribute $225,000 over six years. At the opening ceremony, Daryl Chambers, on behalf of Ericsson, spoke of the company's long-standing association with the arts in Australia, an association which he described as being "driven by the logic of a contemporary communications company aligning itself with the arts as a powerful communications medium."[29]

The competition was administered for the NGV by a professional administrator who was appointed by the Director, and worked with him in establishing guidelines. An independent public relations operator handled the extensive media coverage. The prize was open to Australian artists and there were no constraints - it was offered simply for a work or works of contemporary art. Selectors, who were nominated on the Application Form, chose five finalists from over 460 applicants, one third of whom had proposed entries in the form of installations.[30] All the finalists had submitted installations, and they were given spaces in the Gallery to assemble these for final judging by a panel of judges. Some of the entries included working parts, a fact which created curatorial problems of competition within the exhibition itself. When the finalists were announced, the Premier was apparently dissatisfied with the winner chosen, and instructed the Gallery to purchase one of the other works.[31] He was, however, no doubt satisfied with the large attendances and the vigorous press comment. The choice of installations reflected a current trend which would probably not often result in saleable works, and would have simplified the final judging for both judges and viewers.

In his foreword to the catalogue, Timothy Potts, then Director of the NGV, attempted to put *Contempora5* into perspective by describing it as "an exhibition with an associated prize, not the other way round". He described it as a priority for the Gallery to use this event to serve the interests and priorities of practising artists, and to showcase the most challenging contemporary art.[32] While it was certainly true that viewers had come to see an exhibition, it was also true that the exhibition would not have come into being without the prize, and that the fact of competition had inevitably influenced the nature of the work produced by the entrants. Behind the competition itself was, of course, the politically competitive instinct of a Premier who wanted to offer the biggest prize, at least partly on the assumption that the biggest prize would attract the best art, and who saw Melbourne as the cultural capital and the centre of an arts-based tourist industry. From the viewpoint of the Gallery, the competition provided an opportunity to demonstrate its concern with contemporary art, although this was limited by the fact that it showed the work of only five artists. It generated large attendances (there was no entry fee), and was well supported by a catalogue and an educational program.

The biennial *Contempora5* Prize for 1999 was again sponsored by the State Government of Victoria and supported by Ericsson Australia, with a prize of $100,000. Because of the reconstruction of the NGV it was staged in partnership with the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne. The Premier, Jeff Kennett, described it as part of the Government's commitment to supporting artists in developing their talent and originality.[33] The five finalists were chosen from more than 360 entries which could be either existing works or unrealised projects. There were a variety of objects, the greatest emphasis being on small sculpture. There was some controversy, although not on the same scale as in the first show, and the exhibition was very successful in terms of attendances. It is, however, problematical whether the *prize* will survive the change of government in Victoria which took place in 1999.

Both *Contempora5* exhibitions contrasted strongly with the two exhibitions described earlier, which could indeed more accurately have been described as exhibitions with associated prizes. They provided specialist artists with an opportunity to create important works and have them exhibited, and offered the public an opportunity to see and compare objects which might otherwise not have been exhibited or even

created. The *Contempora5* exhibitions, on the other hand, encouraged more avant garde works. It is interesting to compare Contempora5 with the *Turner Prize* in Britain. The latter was begun in 1984, and based in the Tate Gallery. It was supported at first by private donors, and later by a TV company, which increased the prize to £20,000. It was to be awarded to the person under fifty who had made the greatest contribution to British art over the past year. There is a jury of five, consisting of "art-world bureaucrats", and the basis for its decisions is not publicised. It has, however, consistently inspired bitter controversy and an annual demonstration on the steps of the Tate Gallery, and has presumably attracted numbers of viewers to the Tate.[34]

The NGV was now also showing, and in this way giving tacit approval to, the *Doug Moran National Portrait Prize*, as well as being visited by the *Moët & Chandon* touring exhibition.

The Museum of Modern Art at Heide in Melbourne has been the base for some competitions. It received $10,000 for its work in administering the *Lowenstein Sharp Arts 21 Fellowship*, which was first given in 1996. The $40,000 Fellowship consists of a contribution of $25,000 from Lowenstein Sharp, a firm of Practising Accountants, and the remainder from the Victorian Government Arts 21. Twelve mid-career artists, who must be over 36 and must have exhibited for more than ten years, are invited to participate by submitting a proposal for a project for a new work. These proposals are judged, and the winner has an obligation to donate a work to the MOMA collection. In 1996 the invited artists included painters of the stature of Jan Senbergs, Imants Tillers, Mike Parr and Rick Amor, and it was won by Aida Tomescu. Clearly, the award is driven by a combination of the interests of business, the Victorian Government and the Museum, as paid administrator. It provides welcome support for mid-career artists, and a useful overview of work at this level in Victoria.[35] As has been mentioned earlier, the Museum also very successfully staged the triennial *Clemenger Award* in association with the NGV.

Another new competition based in a major public gallery was the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, which was begun in 1984 by Margie West, who was then Curator of Aboriginal Art at the MAGNT, Darwin, where it is based. It has had several sponsors, including ATSIC and the Australia Council, and is currently sponsored by Telstra. Margie West herself explained that a prestigious award

was conceived as a way of promoting better understanding of the diversity of indigenous Australian art, and of promoting best practice in contemporary Aboriginal art.[36] The competition is limited to adult Aborigines and islanders, but its intention is to educate both Aborigines and non-aborigines. Entries come from all over Australia, although most are from the Northern Territory. Some preselection is essential, because the gallery space can accommodate only about 120 works. The *Award* now offers a first prize of $18,000 and four prizes of $3,000 for differing media.

This is a unique and important competition because it attempts to deal with Aboriginal art more or less on its own terms, and to be accessible to the Aboriginal artists. In practice the concept of competition is successful because it attracts so many entries, and because artists see their work exhibited publicly and in company with the work of others. They have a chance of selling it in Darwin or when it is touring, as well as of winning a prize. Also, the opening is an occasion marked by a large gathering. There were 600 people in 1997, and it toured to five venues in 1997. There is, however, the problem that some artists, particularly those from remote areas, may be disgruntled because their work did not win or was not even exhibited, although the work of their friends was more successful.[37] In other words, competition has its uses for these artists and helps to develop a concept of professionalism, but they have not necessarily accepted the convention that their work will be judged on the basis of criteria which they do not understand.

Observations

It was a remarkable spectrum of new competitions which appeared in the major galleries during this period. The AGNSW forms a basis for comparison because of its long experience in changing circumstances. The cluster of prizes, the results of which were announced at the same time as those of the *Archibald Prize*, was a massive demonstration of the uses of competition. It, and especially the *Archibald*, provided the Gallery with excellent material for publicity and for engaging the interest of viewers in a subject to which they could relate, hopefully giving them food for thought about painting. The *Archibald*, with its range of sizes, styles and techniques, almost created an impression of a curated exhibition. The winning artists, and again particularly the *Archibald* winner, virtually became a property of the Gallery to be photographed and interviewed interminably. The AGNSW prizes thrived

on an exhibition showing a number of artists. In the *Contempora5* and *Seppelts* exhibitions, however, the number of artists shown was comparatively small - the sponsor was selecting artists carefully to project a particular image, and was presenting artists "at the cutting edge" as the most important professionals, an attitude which was emphasised by the large prizes.

In the NGV, both the *Clemenger* and *Rigg* awards had clear directions, suggesting that the Gallery itself had proposed plans on the basis of an assessment of the overall situation. The *Clemenger Prize* is unusual in presenting a finite plan which is presumably based on financial projections which are capable of being realised. It was directed to artists whose careers were already under way, and it aimed to draw attention to their professional achievements while providing encouragement or reward. The *Rigg* award was designed to give prominence to artists with special technical skills, and it also provided practical encouragement for the artists while highlighting their virtuosity. In commenting on its first award, curator Peter Timms gave it indirect praise, saying that it was a case where very large sums of money had succeeded in bringing out the best craft, and in creating a new sense of prestige and importance for it.[38] The same comment does not apply to *Contempora5*, which had a more provocative intention of using a very large prize as a focal point, and a way of buying innovation, and incidentally associating a concept of price with the winning artist and art object. The *Lowenstein Sharp Arts 21 Fellowship* was clearly commercially oriented, but its careful planning ensured that it would provide a practical operational benefit for the winner.

The public face of these competitions represents changing perceptions. Interest still centers on a winner, but the winner is seen in the context of a relatively small group of competitors, often presented in a situation which seems to be curatorially created, rather than consisting of a representative selection of other entries.

The *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Award*, in a totally different situation, is concerned with bringing this group of artists into a better understanding of the professional art world.

Competitions held in other public art galleries and by local government bodies

Public galleries have tended to confer longevity on the competitions which they administer, and a number of competitions of this type have continued on from the second phase to the third phase, as I have mentioned in discussing them earlier. Competitions run by local government authorities have had a more precarious existence, and in NSW, the *Mosman Art Prize* is one of the few survivors of the rush of competitions begun in the Sydney suburbs in the 1960s and before. The number of new competitions being initiated has now decreased significantly, although competitions have recently been begun by the Willoughby City Council and the North Sydney Council, and Botany City Council ran an Aboriginal Art Competition in 1994 to mark the year of Aborigines. The *Printmakers Award* based at the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre is a significant new competition, housed in an impressive new setting.

The *Warringah Art Prize* provides a good illustration of the evolution of the arts policies of councils. The prize, which had been a community event for twenty years, was reviewed by a consultant in 1992 in the light of funding cuts, and changed to a bi-annual event, managed by an Art Exhibitions Co-ordinator. A Warringah Cultural Policy, based on the principles of Diversity, Creativity and Conservation, Co-operation and Integration, Identity and Sense of Place, and Opportunity which was adopted in 1994 represented "a shift away from direct patronage of the arts, to a philosophy which centralises culture in everybody's lives". It was noted that, although there was a high representation of artists from the region in the competition, prizes seldom went to them. In the light of this information and of Council cultural policy and also of budget cuts, the Director of Community Resources recommended to the Council that it should change its cultural development role by replacing the *prize* with an annual, non-acquisitive, selected exhibition with a sponsored *People's Choice Award.*[39] This change had the effect of ending formal competition, and concentrating on creating interest in the work of local amateurs.

Competitions based in galleries and local government bodies in country towns seem to have been more enduring, although with changes in title and content, and often directed to a specialisation. In Grafton, for example, where the Art Society had run an open art competition since

the 1960s, a public gallery was established in 1988. In the same year, the competition became the *Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award*, with a first prize of $5,000, and additional funds for acquisition. This innovation was successful in attracting support from local sponsors, and is now developing a useful special collection for the Gallery. The Gallery has made an effort to develop contact with successful competitors. For example, in 1996 it sent them memorabilia such as press clippings, statistics, a copy of the catalogue, and copies of comments in the Visitors book. The 1988 exhibition toured in NSW and Queensland[40]

Several centres in NSW such as Albury, Wagga Wagga, Broken Hill, Maitland and Goulburn have continued their competitions for long periods, and in Victoria, which had fewer art competitions, some old established ones such as Ballarat, Geelong and Shepparton have continued on, with changing specialisations. There were some innovations, although not in the same numbers as in the second phase. In NSW a biennial prize of $1,000 for watercolours, the *James Kiwi Watercolour prize*, was begun in Wollongong City Gallery in 1994. It resulted from a bequest by a watercolour painter, and was intended to highlight the techniques and subtleties of this medium. It attracted some sixty entries.

There were several new competitions in Victoria. The *Hugh Williamson Prize*, financed in 1984 by a gift celebrating the Centenary of the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, had no restrictions on medium or subject. The Fletcher Jones Foundation offered a *Staff Co-operative Award* of $5,000 from 1984 to 1990 for regionally-based artists throughout Australia, and it began the *Rena Ellen Jones Memorial Print Award*, with a prize of $10,000, in 1997, both at the Warrnambool Art Gallery. Footscray, a Melbourne suburb, ran a *Glass and Ceramics Acquisition* show in 1991 only. In Castlemaine, James Farrell, an artist who was particularly interested in portraits, donated money to the Art Gallery to promote a portrait prize which would be different from the *Archibald* and the *Moran* awards, and it was decided to achieve this by using it for self portraiture. An acquisitive award of $2,500 has been offered biennially since 1991, and it attracts entries from all over the State.

Queensland has had several new competitions run by Shire authorities. Some, such as Aberdare and Hinchinbrook, dated from the 1980s, but more began in the 1990s, for example in Gatton Shire, Laidley Shire,

Widgee Shire, and Moreton Shire. Some other competitions, such as the *Rockhampton Art Competition* and the *Sunshine Coast Contemporary Art Survey*, were based in galleries.

In Western Australia, a few recently established cities on the outskirts of Perth and some country shires also began art competitions in the 1990s, and Tasmanian local government authorities ventured into art competitions for the first time in the 1990s. The *City of Hobart Art Award* began in 1991 as a purchase award of $5,000 for works in any medium, and has become successively more specialised. By 1996 it offered two annual acquisitive prizes - one for fine art and one for craft/design (with changing categories), each with a prize of $5,000. In 1997 the media were Jewellery and Printmaking.[41] The City Council of Clarence, a suburb of Hobart, held an acquisitive exhibition in 1988 and intermittently after that for Tasmanian artists, and the Central Highlands Council also began one in 1995 to encourage local artists and to build a collection which would interest tourists.[42]

Observations

Several of these competitions, and especially those which specialised in a particular format, such as the *Jacaranda* and *Shepparton Prizes*, attracted competitors from other locations, and had the effect of broadening horizons and strengthening local collections for the benefit of both local artists and the public. Others were mainly concerned to provide support for local artists.[43]

Virtually all of the provincial galleries and local government bodies which responded to the Survey in 1997 stated that selling was a major reason for holding the competition and that all entries were for sale. Almost all of these, however, reported that sales were decreasing.

Competitions sponsored by individuals

As had been the case in the earlier phases, it was unusual for individual patrons to sponsor an art competition without the support of an art gallery. In Queensland, the *Jack Manton Prize*, offered in 1987, achieved a compromise. Manton, a dedicated collector, moved from Victoria to Queensland in 1970, having sold his collection of Australian Impressionists to the NGV. To celebrate his eightieth birthday in 1987 he decided to honour the work of the painters he considered to be the

leading contemporary artists in Australia.[44] He did this, jointly with the Queensland Art Gallery, by inviting fourteen artists, including Arthur Boyd, Albert Tucker, Sid Nolan and Brett Whiteley, each to submit several works for exhibition in the Gallery, and offering them the chance of a reward in the form of a prize of $25,000. The prize went to the veteran Lloyd Rees, then aged 92, and the exhibition proved to be an unusually rich assemblage of the work of established artists - a source of satisfaction to Manton himself, and a popular exhibition for the Gallery.

Perhaps the case par excellence of a competition created by an individual sponsor for a special purpose is the *Doug Moran National Portrait Prize*. This prize, based in Sydney, was conceived by a benefactor who claimed to have a strong sense of mission and who had access to the necessary funds from either his personal or business interests. Moran's explanation of his intentions in sponsoring the *Prize* was that he was trying to instil the work ethic into artists and to ensure the survival of traditional skills. Although he admired the idea of the *Archibald Prize*, he considered that the way in which it was being administered was not consistent with Archibald's wishes. His own strategy was to offer a large prize for portraiture, in the belief that this would attract the best artists, and that from their entries the judges would select winners which were consistent with his ideas, and which could then be assembled to form an exhibition which would publicise these ideas. In the planning stages he approached the Premier of NSW and subsequently the QAG, both of whom agreed to look after the prize if he provided the money, and both of whom were concerned with Modernist art.[45] These offers were not acceptable to a patron who denounced Modernist art, and whose sponsorships had included generous prizes for works in conventional styles entered in the RAS Show in Sydney, in the *Naval Review Art Competition* Sydney in 1987 and in the *Henry Lawson Landscape Prize*. To ensure that his principles were put into effect, Moran therefore established his own administration for the staging of a biennial competition which offered a prize of $100,000 for a representational portrait.

This prize and the prospect of a new, but traditional, approach to portraiture were irresistible, and there were large numbers of entries from all around Australia for the first award in 1988. The reactions of artists varied. In 1987, soon after the prize was announced, two former

Archibald winners commented on it. Clifton Pugh, who had won the *Archibald* on three occasions, said that if a man puts up the money for a prize, it is his prerogative to set conditions. On the other hand, Davida Allen said that she would not enter because the competition was too sensational, and because the organisers were trying to turn the clock back.[46] Many artists and the press which represents them have greeted the *Prize* with enthusiasm,[47] but in general, the attitude of the art establishment to the *Doug Moran Prize* has been patronising. For example, in 1995, Edmund Capon, Director of the AGNSW, and much involved with the *Archibald Prize*, said that traditional portrait art is nothing better than photography - perhaps an oblique reference to the great variety of styles which are represented in *Archibald* entries. Timothy Potts, Director of the NGV, in his Foreword to the Catalogue for the 1998 *Moran Prize*, commented diplomatically that the success of the *Prize* testifies to the vitality of portrait painting in Australia today.[48]

In the two stage judging system set up by Moran, thirty finalists (each receiving $1,000) are selected, and finally from them the winner.[49] There is an elaborate catalogue with forewords by distinguished persons who support traditional art. Obviously the competition is extremely costly in terms of prizes, judging, curatorial staff, accommodation and administration generally. Another component of cost is that a select exhibition tours to some ten centres, where it is shown in regional galleries or other buildings such as the Sydney Opera House and Old Parliament House, Canberra. It is now shown also in the Victorian Arts Centre, although not in the public galleries of the other States. It attracts large audiences in all centres. Like *Contempora5*, the *Moran Prize* reflects an assumption that a large prize will attract the best paintings. At all events, it appears to be satisfying its sponsor's evangelistic intention. He promises to provide for it to continue indefinitely, and has said that rigid control of its aims will be maintained by his family.[50] Recent publicity about feuds and major financial settlements within the Moran family throws some doubt on the practicality of this promise. Assuming that it continues, the way in which the prize develops further will depend on the interaction between artists and judges. Quite evidently, Moran considers the portrait to be the epitome of art forms, and certainly one which it is appropriate to use to demonstrate his own artistic ideal. Although portraiture is no longer generally regarded as being in the mainstream of painting, the

fact that it requires a degree of representation, and even realism, and that it interests the public, makes it particularly appropriate for his purpose. The prize has always attracted abundant press comment, often enthusiastic on the part of artists' organisations and critical on the part of the professional critics.[51]

An important and more recent benefaction by individuals is the *Anne and Gordon Samstag Scholarships*, established in 1992. Gordon Samstag was an American artist who taught at the South Australian School of Art between 1961 and 1972. He left a large bequest to be used in perpetuity to fund a number of annual scholarships which would enable Australian visual artists to "study and develop their artistic capacities, skills and talents ... outside of Australia".[52] The Scholarships are generous in providing travel and tuition costs and a living allowance of about $30,000 for each successful entrant. Usually five are given each year. Samstag was completely flexible about the type of visual art submitted by entrants and also about the destination of the scholarships, which are open to all Australian visual arts graduates or students. He was prescriptive only about some of the members of the judging panel, requiring that one member be an artist, and he also specified that one recipient each year should come from a South Australian art institution. The bequest made no requirement for an exhibition, and a catalogue of the works submitted by the winners each year is produced, not at Samstag's request, but as a record of the progress of the awards. Because of this flexibility, it should be possible to accommodate reasonably easily any changes which become necessary to the administration of the bequest. In this case, the planning has clearly been based on the benefactor's own experience in the area, and a wish to provide assistance without circumscribing the work of the participants. Clearly also, the benefactor had no wish to gain publicity from the results of his generosity.[53]

A contrast in terms of both funding and prestige is the *Kangaroo Award for Sculpture*, which has been conceived, organised and funded since 1981 solely by Peter Burns, a painter and former office-bearer in the CAS in Melbourne. A variety of entries are received, mainly from amateur sculptors. The competition is for outdoor sculpture in any medium, and entries are exhibited at his home at Kangaroo Ground outside Melbourne.[54]

Observations

Individuals who are able sponsor to competitions free from intervention by institutions have the luxury of ensuring that the conditions which they specify are applied. As far as intentions are concerned, Moran and Samstag illustrate opposite ends of the spectrum. Moran's intention is to influence and even control artists to conform with his conception of art, and he has been adept in getting support for his ideas from judges and the notables who write forewords for his catalogues. He seems to envisage artists as practitioners who can be persuaded to conform with his ideas, rather than as individuals whose innovative and creative ideas should be valued. It seems likely that association of the name of Moran with this popular but conservatively motivated competition was a benefit socially, and even commercially in connection with Moran's business. Samstag's bequest is perhaps not strictly speaking a competition, but it provides an interesting contrast, since Samstag concerned himself with provision of training for young innovators, and imposed no constraints, leaving it to the administrators of the day to respond to the current situation. Burns enjoys putting on a small competition which provides an annual opportunity for local sculptors to exhibit their work.

Competitions sponsored for commercial purposes

A feature of commercially sponsored art competitions during the 1980s and 1990s is, not so much that the categories of sponsors have changed, but that competitions have become more sophisticated. In some cases sponsors have assumed complete responsibility for staging competitions and have ensured that this has been done, and has been seen to be done, in a highly professional way. These sponsors have therefore succeeded in creating an impression that not only have they been generous in supporting contemporary art, but that they have been expert in doing so. This approach may appear to have been pioneered much earlier by the firms of Georges and Transfield, but both of these already had a commitment to contemporary art, which was demonstrated in the case of Georges through its possession of a gallery, and for Transfield through its founder's personal interest. This was not necessarily the case with later commercially motivated sponsors.

For commercial sponsors, staging an art competition could now be seen as an investment, with publicity as the main dividend. According to

expert opinion, this publicity is not intended to be simply advertising, which is directive in its message. It is concerned with an indirect process of positioning a brand or company image by communicating the associations which it has.[55] Planning therefore involves identification of a target audience with which the sponsor wishes to develop links, and the staging of a kind of competition and exhibition which would be appropriate for that audience. Sponsors themselves have often organised or directed the organisation of competitions, or have at least been influential in the staging of them, rather than merely giving their name to a competition organised by someone else. The artists, the apparent beneficiaries, have provided a kind of raw material.

In a way, the tone for this new commercial attitude had been set by the international firm of Mobil Oil. In America in 1953 the brand name Mobiloil had received the highest honour for continuous service to the public. Following this tradition in Australia, Mobil Oil ran the *Mobil quest for Singers* for several years from 1947 onwards. It also sponsored opera and visiting art exhibitions. In the Philippines in 1980 it had offered awards for painting. In Australia in 1977, J. B. Leslie, the Managing Director, addressed an annual meeting of the Gallery Directors' Council in Sydney on the subject of patronage of the arts in Australia. Discussing the responsibility of corporations to the community he stressed that art was now big business, and that support for it had been strengthening in America, where it was being fostered by a Business Committee for the Arts which provided support and counselling for corporations. He advocated the creation of a similar national committee in Australia, distinct from art professionals and the Australia Council, and with the function of stimulating, co-ordinating and encouraging the arts. This Committee would be free to develop its own rules, to make direct representations to the government, and to plan support for provision of special skills, in marketing, for example, as distinct from merely sponsoring.[56]

In the same year an organisation somewhat along these lines was set up in the form of Arts Research, Training and Support Ltd., a non-profit organisation sponsored by the private sector to assist the arts in Australia. It established an awards system which was not directed at artists, but at companies which were selected because they had undertaken projects which provided support for the arts, and especially projects which were innovative and ongoing, which involved the

company's own employees, and which were integrated with business objectives. These awards, named the *Business in the Arts Awards*, were funded by Mobil Oil. They were initiated by nominations made by recipients of benefits or by the firms themselves, and covered the visual and performing arts and literature. Twelve awards across this range were made annually on the recommendation of a judging panel, and they were presented by distinguished personages at dinners which were prestigious occasions. Art competitions did not appear among the winners, but in 1978, which was the first year, Honourable Mentions were given to *Georges' Art Prize* and the Tooheys' *'Paint a Pub* competition. Citations were received by Sabemo in Western Australia, who had given awards annually for painting and sculpture by workers in the construction industry, and Transfield received a citation for the *Biennale of Sydney*, which it had supported after it terminated the *Transfield Prize*.[57] In relation to these awards, which continued for at least ten years, Mobil Oil was in effect in the delicate position of acting as a patron of the competing sponsors who were business colleagues, but conferring its patronage at second hand and without having to make judgements. Another arts initiative which it sponsored for several years was a scheme of Fellowships in arts administration, and it also supported a variety of programs concerned with issues such as youth road safety, and in the fields of music, the performing arts and literature. Mobil Oil's initiatives must have been important in creating a situation in which it was almost *de rigeur* for major businesses to undertake projects which would demonstrate their support for community activities.

A number of Australian businesses continued to use competitions as a way of publicising their own wares. The *Faber-Castell Prize for Drawing*, offered by these suppliers of art and graphic materials, is a good example. It was begun in 1983, and by 1985 was attracting well over 500 entries for a prize of $4,000. Some drawings were purchased for Faber-Castell's international collection.[58] The *Canson Student Printmaking Award* for tertiary students (begun in 1990 and still operating) offers tuition and materials at the Australian Print Workshop, and also inclusion of selected work in a special collection which is available for reference.[59] The firm of Duroloid planned its *Silk Cut Acquisitive Award for Linocut Prints* in association with the Print Council, and offered the reward of a visit to Amsterdam and the purchase of selected prints. The Queensland brewer, Castlemaine

Perkins, gave $3,400 in prizes for paintings relating to pubs, and the cotton growing centre of Narrabri offered prizes for works using cotton fibre for an exhibition in 1996. The *IPEX Plumbing Award* in Sydney had an additional dimension. The hardware company which sponsored it offered prizes of $1,000 to either art and sculpture students or plumbers for sculpture made from plumbing materials.[60] A wide range of enterprises was now using this kind of indirect advertising, and at the same time offering some awards which provided practical benefits for artists.

In some cases the connection between the sponsoring company and the competition which it sponsored was fairly tenuous. For example, ACTA Shipping, a major container shipping line, created the acquisitive *Australian Maritime Art Award* in 1985, offering a prize of $10,000 for paintings of commercial shipping and port-based maritime activities in Australia. It was related to the sponsor's own activities, and it attracted entrants from all over Australia.[61] The *Macworld Expo Art Award* and the *Insideout Award* were both given by desktop publishers for computer generated graphics and design.[62] There continued, however, to be a number of cases where sponsors offered prizes in fields which were not associated with their line of business, and were simply given in response to requests from local organisers.[63]

The media continued to offer art competitions, some open to outside artists, and no doubt intended to provide interesting copy, and some intended as a reward for the artists they employed. Some of the more ambitious ones were the *Melbourne Herald-Sun Art Prize*, first given in 1995 in conjunction with the Museum of Modern Art, and offering a prize of $12,000 plus a round-the-world trip and the use of a house in the Yarra Valley for a year. The *Sydney Morning Herald, On this day* award of $15,000 had as its theme the front page of the SMH on a nominated day, and the *Prime Television Painting Prize*, which was based in Newcastle, offered overseas travel and a touring exhibition. The *Canberra Times* offered an acquisitive *National Art Award* in 1981. In 1991 The *Adelaide Advertiser* began offering a prize of $6,000 as a way of stimulating interest in its longstanding *Open Air Art Exhibition.* In 1985 *The Bulletin*, in co-operation with the Black and White Artists' Club, began offering annual awards for cartoons in several categories. They are judged by members of the Club on the year's work in cartooning. It is clear from a review of the 1990 results in *The Bulletin* that most

artists were enthusiastic about the awards and the recognition which they brought, especially in a profession where individual artists work in isolation, and to some extent in competition.[64] The exhibition is shown at the State Library of NSW which, as a by-product, is forming a collection of works by Australian cartoonists and caricaturists.[65]

Art competitions were still seen as a useful way of marking an occasion. For example, to celebrate the Bicentenary, the ANZ Banking Corporation gave a total of $200,000 to eight major galleries throughout Australia for the purpose of commissioning paintings with a Bicentennial theme. These paintings were toured as part of the celebrations, and were afterwards presented to the respective galleries.[66]

It was an overseas firm, the French champagne company of Moët & Chandon, which in 1987 established a competition which was to set new standards of professionalism and concern for artists. It was perhaps conceived partly as a reward to Australia, its fastest growing market, and the seventh largest in its world wide network, and perhaps also as a response to competition from Australian vineyards. It was to be funded from the advertising budget. The Chairman of the company stated its intentions in a message to the first exhibition and tour:

> *In our strong commitment to the future of Australia, we had wished to make a contribution that would be enduring and inspiring and of real significance. The true humanity of a country lies in its arts and they must be carried into the future by the young and emerging creative artists. It was in this area then, that we at Moët & Chandon decided to make our investment in Australia.*[67]

The Moët & Chandon Australian Art Foundation was established to give effect to these sentiments, with an initial commitment of ten years.[68] It planned three programs which were held annually. The first, the *Moët & Chandon Art Fellowship*, offered an award of $50,000 to artists between the ages of 20 and 35, and travel to France, where accommodation was to be provided for a year. The second, arising from the first, was a touring exhibition of the work of about twenty selected competitors, to be shown in several of the capital cities at the major public art galleries. Thirdly, the Foundation was to provide an annual gift of $50,000 to these galleries in rotation for the purchase of contemporary Australian art, but purchases were not necessarily tied to

the work of competition entrants. It is worth noting, however, that the NGV in 1996 specifically chose to purchase the work of previous *Moët & Chandon* finalists. [69]

The award was not prescriptive, except in relation to the age of the contestants and the purchases by galleries. The standards of the award were, of course, dependent on the entries themselves and on the judging, but in practical terms it offered real encouragement to artists throughout Australia. It provided an open competition with the chance of a generous prize and the title of Fellow, rather than winner. The period of residence in a French community provided the Fellow with new perspectives and a valuable base for work and travel, and the possibility of having work exhibited in public galleries in Australia in the context of the award promised excellent publicity. For the galleries, the availability of a substantial sum for purchases of contemporary art provided an opportunity for purchases in an area which it might otherwise have been difficult to justify. The fact that the award was a continuing one was a benefit for all of those involved, because it made forward planning possible, and helped to develop standards over time.

A feature of the programs was that, although funded by a French firm, they have been planned and administered by Australians. Swift and Moore Pty Ltd, the Australian distributors for Moët & Chandon, and in particular its Manager, John Livingstone, have clearly been involved with the administration. Jonah Jones and Maudie Palmer, both Australians with long experience in arts management, have acted successively as consultants since the inception of the Foundation, the latter since 1996. All judges have been Australians. It seems fair to say that, although Moët & Chandon's patronage is European in origin, its implementation is effectively delegated to the country where the operation is based. The situation is presumably the same in New Zealand, where Moët & Chandon has given fellowships and carried out some sponsorships.

The competition has been presented with style. The Catalogue essays have usually discussed the works exhibited, and contained reproductions of these and biographies of their artists. In 1994 the contest was extended to include sculpture and works on paper, and in 1996 it was further widened to include all art media. The number of entries seems to have varied from eight hundred in 1994 down to about

400, and the problem of selecting the finalists is now handled by pre-judging on the basis of slides. Nevertheless, the range and quality of works to be assessed is huge, and, as is often the case in competitions, the resulting exhibition has no real unity. The critic Colin Simpson complained in 1996 that the diversity of media had the effect of destroying the sense of competition.[70] As the Catalogue for 1995 noted, it presupposes an informed audience. Such an audience would presumably consist of those who habitually visit galleries, raising the question of the extent to which actual or potential customers for the wares of Moët & Chandon are likely to be gallery buffs. In other words, is the publicity resulting from the competition expected to encourage sales of champagne, or simply to create a prestigious image for the company? There has usually been an exhibition in Paris of the work of the Fellow, and it would be interesting to know the effect of this. The competition has consistently attracted critical, and on occasions adverse, comment in Australia. A recurring comment has been one which applies to many competition exhibitions - that the whole range of entries is seen only by the judges, and that they lack context in comparison with curated exhibitions.

In 1997 the first decade of the award was celebrated, and was marked in two ways. The first was a special catalogue article by Daniel Thomas, reviewing the careers of the Fellows chosen up to that time, commenting on the formative effect of their residence in France, and noting the interesting statistic that seven of the ten were women. The second was a review of the use which the State galleries had made of the sum of $500,000 which had been made available to them by the Foundation for acquiring current Australian art.[71] This kind of retrospective assessment of the benefits which the award has had for individual artists, and especially a published one, is not often a feature of sponsorships. It was, however, apparently timely for Moët & Chandon. In February 2000 the firm announced, instead of a prize, an exhibition of new works by five artists who had been commissioned to produce works on a theme, thus substituting curatorship for competition. The sponsor's future plans are not known.

Another major international company to involve itself in sponsorships was Shell Australia. It was mentioned earlier that it had actively sponsored the *Fremantle Print Awards* since they began, and it has also supported other competitions from time to time. In 1985 it inaugurated

a $5,000 *Shell Australia Acquisitive Sculpture Prize* which it sponsored in conjunction with the Association of Sculptors of Victoria, and which attracted entries from five States. During the 1980s and 1990s Caltex has similarly sponsored a variety of sports and arts awards in several States, including a *Biennial Print Prize* of $1,000, begun in 1995. The Peter Stuyvesant Trust, by contrast, has concentrated on importing exhibitions from overseas and making presentations of works of art to the NGA. Its one venture into art competitions was in the early 1980s, when it sponsored an art and ceramics award for the Municipal Council of Kiama in NSW.

The Resource Finance Corporation, an international merchant bank in the field of natural resources with offices in Sydney, Perth, and Denver, Colorado, has offered the *RFC Glass Prize* of $7,5000 annually since 1995. The enthusiasm behind the Prize stems from Andrew Plummer, an Executive Director of RFC, who is a collector of contemporary Australian glass, and who works in co-operation with Maureen Cahill, the Manager of the Glass Artists' Gallery in Sydney, and a lecturer in glass at the Sydney College of the Arts.[72] The objective of the Gallery is to educate the public about glass as art, and the *Prize* contributes to this by encouraging creativity in studio glass. Although it is supported by an international company, and the 1997 exhibition of twenty-five pieces was shown in Denver as well as in Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth, the *Prize* is Australian in inspiration.

Among sponsorships by Australian enterprises during the 1980s and 1990s, Artworkz Promotions was a new kind of entrepreneur - a small group which established itself as a company in Melbourne in 1989 with the objectives of providing opportunities for emerging artists to exhibit their work, and also of collecting works of art. It was able to obtain funding from BP Australia, which had committed itself to sponsorships in the arts, and its major project, *Artworkz One*, was an exhibition with acquisitive prizes for oils and acrylics and works on paper of $2,000 and $1,500 respectively. About two hundred artists entered for pre-selection by slides, from which fifty artists were selected to have their work judged and exhibited. Six subsequent Artworkz exhibitions and prizes were based in the commercial Gallery 101 in Collins Street, Melbourne, which provided the major sponsorship until the project ended in the 1990s.[73]

In the 1990s AMCOR, a Melbourne-based company, developed an art competition as a way of publicising its own products. AMCOR is a major manufacturer of paper and packaging, with interests throughout Australia and overseas. Through a series of integrations it has now become the only manufacturer of printing and writing papers in Australia. In 1985 its mill at Broadford in Victoria offered an *APM Acquisitive Art Award* of $2,000 for paintings by Victorian artists.[74] Its major sponsorship project, however, was the *AMCOR Paper Awards*, which were given some ten years later, and which were associated with its products since they were for works on paper, or works which used paper. There was no direct competition, except at the pre-selection stage, because all the artists who took part (usually about nine) were invited to do so, and all were at mid career. There were no prizes. Each artist was asked to contribute several items, so that their current work was well represented.[75] The resulting exhibitions have been supported by excellent catalogues, and have been seen in Melbourne, Sydney and other centres. Some of the work which was contributed has been purchased by AMCOR. The Awards reflect the intention of the Company to stage an event associated with their product, and they have succeeded in creating one which has artistic prestige, and which appeals to a limited but discerning audience.

Some two years later Visyboard, AMCOR's chief competitor in the field of packaging, also began sponsoring an art competition. This was the *Visy Board Art Prize*, held at Tanunda in South Australia, and advertised as the second most valuable on the Australian calendar. It was staged as part of the historic Barossa Valley Vintage Festival, a biennial event which had been held for over 50 years, and had always included art. In 1997 it was decided that these Festivals should now include contemporary art, and a Prize was instituted and sponsored by Richard Pratt, the owner of Visy Board, and a collector and art patron. The first prize, which consisted originally of $30,000 and 1,000 bottles of premium Shiraz, was increased in 1999 to $40,000. This was an invitation competition, and over sixty artists responded to the invitation to take part. In comparison with the AMCOR it was a more traditionally conceived and popularly oriented show, in which all the entries were paintings, designed to provide variety for viewers.[76]

The *Fleurieu Art Prize*, which was first offered in 1998, had some similarities. It was located on the Fleurieu Peninsula, a wine producing

area of South Australia with considerable potential for tourism. One of the recommendations of a Tourist Profile for the district which had been prepared in 1996, was the development and promotion of a range of festivals and events, particularly outside the peak visitation season from January to April.[77] The Fleurieu Biennale, of which the *Art Prize* forms part, was designed to supply this need. It offers a series of events located in seven wineries over two weeks, and consisting of exhibitions with various prizes, and dinners entertained by distinguished speakers. Patrons are therefore tempted to relax and to buy. The main prize is $50,000, and there are four other prizes. All are for landscape except one for sculpture.

These prizes were aimed at attracting an audience from the general public, but some have had a more specialised intention. One of these is the *Kedumba Drawing Award*, which is based in the Blue Mountains Grammar School. In addition to representatives of the school, the organisation which sponsors it consists of members of a local Art Society and some local businesses, including a major resort, which suggests overtones of concern with potential tourist interest. It has an advisory group of Trustees with specialised expertise. Its aim is to build a collection of drawings of excellence for the school, and its strategy has been to invite some twenty artists to compete each year, and then to select a winner, or possibly winners, to be purchased.[78] The results are announced at a dinner attended by sponsors, the judge and participants, a combination which must create an interesting social situation. There have been complaints that the nominations reflect the personal bias of the selector. There have also been complaints on occasions when judges were unwilling to nominate a single winner, so that the money available for purchases had to be shared. It has been pointed out that a selection drawn from the more established artists seems unfair in an invitation prize, and that in the long term the absence of current newcomers could result in deficiencies in the collection.[79] The overall result, however, seems to have been the gradual development of a collection of some quality which is an asset for the school and for the district.

The *Blundstone Australasian Contemporary Art Award* represented a new departure for Tasmania, and demonstrated the good intentions and the problems which may be the lot of a sponsor. It was planned as a biennial award by the Tasmanian firm of Blundstone Boots to celebrate

its 125th anniversary, and was first staged in 1995 in the QVAMG in Launceston, which provided space and expertise. It was a sophisticated sequel to two previous public relations projects - sponsorship of the Tap Dogs, and the *Do something with a Blundstone* competition, the objective of which was to transform a boot into a different object. The *Award* offered an acquisitive prize of $20,000, plus a return air fare to Europe sponsored by QANTAS. Blundstone met the cost of freight from Melbourne to Launceston, an expensive exercise. The competition attracted 480 entries, including sixty four from New Zealand, and pre-selected entrants were judged at the QVMAG.[80] The exhibition travelled to galleries in NSW and Victoria. It provided a national overview of contemporary art which was rare in Tasmania, and it resulted in an interesting acquisition for the QVMAG, but it was not repeated because of the unexpectedly high overall cost.[81]

Some other innovative projects were based in Melbourne, and, like *Contempora5* were developed jointly with the Victorian Government. In 1996 the international law firm Deacons Graham and James, and the State government agency Arts 21, began an award of $20,000 for a residency in Asia for Victorian artists. It is administered and exhibited by the Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne. The firm took on the project partly as a way of introducing its new name into the market place and partly as a general public relations exercise. It was pleased with the calibre of the entries, and felt satisfied that it had hit the target market.[82] In the following year the accounting firm of Lowenstein Sharpe Feiglin Ades commenced sponsorship of an annual Fellowship, also jointly with the Victorian Government, an award which has already been discussed in relation to the Museum of Modern Art at Heide. Yet another award involving Arts 21 is the *George Baldessin/Arts 21 Travelling Fellowship*, administered by the Victorian College of the Arts, and funded in part by the editioning of a casting of a Baldessin sculpture by the George Baldessin Memorial Foundation. The $16,000 Fellowship is available to sculpture graduate.

Most of these commercially sponsored competitions have offered works for sale, but, it seems that, except in the case of popularly directed competitions such as the Fleurieu Prize and the Visy Board Art Prize, the fact that fewer entries are shown reduces the interest in sales.

There seem to have been few competitions to produce designs for a practical purpose during this period.[83] Those which were held include

some war memorials, which I will discuss later in relation to competitions held to promote an idea, because of the particularly complex ideological issues which they raise.

It is worth mentioning here, however, that the Association of Sculptors of Victoria in particular has been active in promoting the use of sculpture, in making its members known and in fostering greater public recognition of sculpture generally.[84] It has always been a problem that sculptors who enter competitions for sculpture for a specific purpose are likely to have to spend considerable time on design and preparatory work which is largely wasted if they do not win. In an attempt to overcome this problem, the Society approached the Government of Victoria, putting it to them that this is an unsustainable situation for sculptors, and that consequently many good sculptors simply do not bother to enter competitions.[85] This approach was particularly timely because of the commitment of the Kennett government to spending a proportion of the capital works budget on collaboration by teams of designers and artists, and for the commissioning of artworks. As a result the Melbourne City Council has compiled model guidelines for the commissioning of visual arts projects. They define a commission as:

> *The creation of an original work of art by a suitably qualified artist (or group of artists) in response to a defined brief which has been proposed by an organisation or individual who is willing and able to pay the costs incurred in creating the work, and who will be responsible for the care and presentation of the work after completion.*[86]

These Guidelines are available to prospective tenderers. They are accompanied by comprehensive information on the policy which they reflect, and also on collections management policy. One of the nine aspects which they cover is Artistic Practice, which includes two particularly significant statements. The first is that the motivation of the artist to create innovative and original work is one of the main reasons for ensuring a clear contractual relationship for a commission. In other words, it recognises the importance of artistic freedom, although conversely artists have to accept that they are working within the constraints of the patron's requirements. The second is that artists are increasingly aware of the commercial and competitive environment in which they work, a factor which is essential to the commissioning agency. The great value of the Guidelines is that they represent mutual

recognition of the respective positions of artists and patrons in relation to the marketing of art. The City of Sydney has also developed a Public Art Policy which is supported by published guidelines and criteria for evaluation of proposals, commissions and acquisitions for permanent public artworks.[87]

Observations

In reviewing commercially sponsored art competitions during the third phase, the two fundamental provisions of the Guidelines mentioned above are particularly significant - that artists must have artistic freedom, and, conversely that they must observe the sponsor's requirements and recognise that they are working within a commercial environment. A study of corporate support for the arts commissioned by the Australia Council in 1986 showed that few Australian companies had definite policies about sponsorship. They were market oriented, and saw support for the arts as a way of enhancing their corporate image, and demonstrating their identification with events of style, distinction, excellence and/or innovation.[88] These comments applied to the arts in general, but they were clearly reflected in art competitions such as the *Seppelts* and *Fleurieu* awards which were associated with the hospitality and tourist trade, and so had a strong local interest. The *Moët & Chandon* award was differently based, being offered by an overseas company, which traded in one product throughout Australia. The comments made in the study were reflected also in competitions which supported the interests of the government. Arts practitioners reported some apprehension about loss of artistic control and freedom in sponsored events. A follow-up survey commissioned by the Australia Council in 1996 suggested that, for the visual arts, the support of large companies had been largely in the form of purchases, but that this and other types of support had declined.[89] A similar finding was recorded in Rosanne Martorella's study of business sponsorship of art in several countries, which found that in Australia corporate sponsorship was not extensive, and that it mainly took the form of purchases for the company itself, and occasional support for major exhibitions.90

The awards offered by organisations such as Duroloid, Faber and Canson, which used competitions to publicise the art materials which they themselves marketed, and so were directed at potential customers, were usually very practical and must have been attractive to artists. All

three of these firms collected prize-winning works which formed a study collection for artists, so that they were supportive of artists professionally. Less directly, the media-sponsored competitions offered good prizes as well as good publicity. Other newer sponsors were now becoming more calculating in their intentions and their competitions were carefully planned to achieve a particular result. A strong emphasis on professional presentation, was exemplified in competitions such as *Moët & Chandon*, *RFC* and *Contempora5*. There was a tendency to specialisation in format, as in the *Kedumba Award*, or in terms of style, as in *Contempora5* and the *Seppelts Award*. There was also emphasis on pre-selection of entrants, which was often a practical necessity because of large numbers of entrants, but which had the effect of limiting, severely in some cases, the numbers of items which could be shown. As the *Age* critic noted in relation to *Contempora5*, it was the prizes which were responsible for bringing the entries together, and she did not concede that this could not have been done by curators. She did, however, see that the presentation of the chosen entries was an issue and that curatorial input was important in this in order to raise the profile of contemporary art for the public.[91] Acquisitive awards could have the effect of influencing the decisions which were made, especially if there were multiple choices, because of limited funds.

Artists now profited from the atmosphere of professionalism which was created for them, and also, in some cases, by opportunities to specialise. Competitions no doubt gave them some opportunities to develop their ideas and to produce experimental works which would not otherwise have been feasible. On the other hand, in more specialised exhibitions the work of fewer artists might be shown, so that opportunities were limited. By contrast, competitions such as the *Visyboard* and *Fleurieu Prizes* were open competitions, aimed at a popular audience, and were no doubt successful in attracting the interest of that audience.

Competitions held to promote ideas

The most prominent competitions in this category are for religious art, but they are rarely sponsored by religious institutions. In the climate of professionalism and commercialism which prevailed in the 1980s, the *Blake Prize* continued to move with the prevailing currents. For over twenty years it had enjoyed the generous sponsorship of the

Commonwealth Bank, which provided exhibition space, funds and administrative support. In 1985 the Bank withdrew its sponsorship, ending a period during which arrangements for running the prize had become almost routine. The Society was now abruptly confronted with financial reality. Its first reaction was to find another sponsor, and, if necessary to limit the prize to an invitation contest. It took expert advice on management, it arranged to be entered on the Register of Cultural Organisations which allowed tax exemptions to donors, and it reviewed its own aims and attributes, concluding that the prize should continue as a major art event.[92] For three years it survived on contributions from members and individual supporters. Vigorous lobbying produced a succession of new short-term sponsors, including a computer software company, two investment banking firms and a firm of overseas merchant bankers, none of whom presumably have had direct interest in the religious associations of the prize. They have, however, enabled it to keep going, using the gallery of the State Library of NSW and the Blaxland Gallery for its exhibitions.

In this way the Society has succeeded in maintaining the prize with the support of sponsors who are willing to sponsor an idealistic artistic enterprise which attracts some public interest and perhaps tax deductions. There have been a succession of controversial winners, and in 1994 the scope of the prize was broadened to encompass "spiritual" as well as religious art, an attempt to remove the continuing difficulty of defining religious art and then limiting the entries to conform with the definition. In the Track Record which was prepared as part of a review in 1995 the Society claimed that the competition had attracted contributions by many famous artists, and that it ranked with the *Archibald Prize* in critical comment, and in encouraging support by artists.[93] The Chairman described it as a vehicle for the evolution of an Australian conception of religious art.[94] Bruce James had, in 1994, removed the blame from artists for making insincere objects in the name of the sacred when the religious principle in Western culture had become thoroughly debased. His view was that we actually need an art of the religious in an increasingly irreligious period. In this situation, he saw the Blake as a useful and sometimes exciting, and even controversial, Australian art event, which was well promoted and organised, but which badly needed an artist of real and powerful religiosity.[95] The Blake Society itself would undoubtedly have shared that view.

The *Blake Prize* has now been joined by other prizes for religious art which have differed from it in specifying religious themes which were to be depicted by competitors. The *Mandorla Art Prize* in Perth originated in 1985 with a religious group whose idea was to use a competition as a way of developing an exhibition of religious art. In this case a specifically religious message was mandatory, because all entries were to be based on a passage from scripture which was specified each year. Annual sponsorship of $15,000 was provided for about eight years by a wealthy Catholic businessman. When this ended it was possible to sustain the award for only one year, and it has now gone into abeyance.[96]

The *Mary McKillop Art Award*, with a first prize of $25,000, was a once only award, instituted by the Mary McKillop Secretariat in 1995 to celebrate the beatification of Australia's first potential saint. Its theme, more explicit than those of the *Mandorla Prize*, was to portray the "Life and Times of Mary McKillop" - almost an invitation for an illustration rather than a work of art, especially since sources of information were listed on the entry form, so that artists could make their entries factual. Similarly, entries in the *Needham Religious Art Prize* of $2,000, established to "encourage life enhancing art", were expected to interpret or portray a biblical reference in a way which would inspire or confirm Christian belief.[97] The prize was sponsored by a committee in the Mount Gambier Anglican Parish in 1998.

It seems appropriate to include some war memorials in this category of competitions which were held to promote ideas. The memorials which I have in mind have a special significance because, on behalf of the Nation, they present commemorative messages relating to the part played by Australians in a variety of different conflicts. Several memorials of this kind have been erected in Anzac Parade, Canberra. Most of them were designed on the basis of competitions in the 1980s and 1990s, but the earliest was the RAAF Memorial, the subject of a competition in 1971 which was won by sculptor Inge King with an abstract sculpture.

The competitions for designs are now conducted by the National Capital Authority in two stages. In the first stage qualified persons are invited to submit conceptual design proposals on the basis of information

which is provided on the purpose and background of the memorial and on technical specifications covering issues such as location, materials, conservation and vandalism, and also funding. From these, assessors select five competitors to continue to the second stage, in which they are paid to develop their design and to prepare drawings, models and costings. These detailed proposals are assessed by a committee consisting of representatives of the service or services concerned, the Australian War Memorial, the National Capital Development Authority and artistic advisors.[98] Once a design is chosen there would, of course, be further discussions before work goes ahead. In relation to the competition itself, two important aspects of this procedure are particularly significant. Firstly, although each competitor is probably in fact a composite of artist, architect and/or other expertise, it is the artist who is fundamentally responsible for the artistic idea represented in the final structure. Secondly, to create a design which will satisfy the disparate group of assessors is an extremely difficult task. On both counts, the artist therefore faces a formidable challenge. Unlike the *Blake Prize*, which expects the artist to express a personal feeling of spirituality, a war memorial requires the artist to project a national reaction. Two recently erected memorials achieve this in different ways. The *Vietnam Memorial* of 1992 is a complex structure dominated by granite stelae, which was designed by sculptor Ken Unsworth, and the Sydney firm of architects Tonkin Zulaikha Hartford. The *Service Nurses Memorial* of 1999 consists of massive curved glass walls which carry designs and inscriptions, and was designed by Robin Moorhouse with Looking Glass Press Pty Ltd.[99]

Ideologically motivated competitions are often intended to engage the interest of entrants rather than to test their artistic skills. For example, the *Rainforest Art Competition* in 1990 was directed to school children, with the aim of interesting them in the conservation of rain forest, and the Greenpeace-Australia Art Prize was similarly intended to encourage artists to think about their relationship with the environment. The *Mahlab Law Week Art Prize* was offered by Mahlab, a recruitment company, in 1985 and 1986 as part of NSW Law Week, which is a program designed to promote greater understanding of the legal system, and a similar prize was offered in the 1990s in Wollongong.

Two awards which have the intention of supporting the ideas of Aboriginal artists should be mentioned. The first is the *RAKA Award*

(the Ruth Adeney Koori Award) which was established in 1990 by art historian Bernard Smith in honour of his wife. It operates in a five-year cycle, offering awards annually to Aboriginal artists in various areas of the arts, of which the visual arts is one, and is administered by the Australian Centre at the University of Melbourne. Another is the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Art Award*, originally held in 1993 as part of the International Year for the World's Indigenous people, and conceived as a way of communicating the feeling of Aborigines for their heritage. It took the form of an exhibition of works by indigenous artists relating to places which were important to them, each one supported by a statement of the reasons behind the painting. The *Award* has been staged in Canberra, with a number of commercial sponsors, and is effectively run by non-Aboriginal people. It offered a first prize of $17,000 and some other prizes. A large number of entries were received from all over Australia, and it has now been offered three times.[100] While the idea behind the competition is consistent with the strong feeling which Aborigines have for their own country, it is ironic that, because the exhibition does not tour, it is probably seen by few Aborigines. Moreover, the competitive basis of the exhibition may tend to concentrate attention on techniques and presentation rather than on the significance of the places which are the subject of the exhibits.

Observations

The *Blake Prize* is outstanding among competitions in this category in terms of longevity, and it has continued to attract intermittent attention to the idea of religious art, mainly through press comment. In its later years, however, it has failed to generate public enthusiasm. Although it respects artists and has been receptive to a variety of artistic styles and approaches, this lack of enthusiasm seems to extend to the artists who are competitors. The other prizes for religious art are concerned with a more literal approach, and are attractive mainly to local artists. Artists responsible for the design of war memorials are acknowledged in descriptive material and in the press, but in general interest in the project tends to concentrate on the significance of the memorial rather than on its artistic qualities. These types of competitions therefore seem to have done little to enhance the image of the artist.

The *National Aboriginal Heritage* exhibitions have had good publicity and have had useful public relations outcomes for the successful artists, who might otherwise have received little publicity.

Competitions sponsored by organisations in the community

A variety of groups in the community were the most enthusiastic respondents to the selective survey of competitions carried out in 1997, sending in twenty-five replies. Most of these dated from the 1970s at the earliest, and their comments were fairly consistent. Their competitions had often been started with the aim of selling works of art, or for public relations purposes, but acquisition and the sponsor's personal interest in art were also significant factors. The most common motives of sponsors were to promote emerging artists and to help local artists to display their work. The competition was also seen as an important cultural event for the community, and as being educational for local artists. One had, for example, provided working demonstrations of art and craft. Not surprisingly, they reported good support from locals and tourists, and in some cases there were Australia-wide entries. The report on sales was not uniformly optimistic - in several cases they were said to be diminishing, one reason given being that the works were too large. Organisers were dependent on local businesses as sponsors for prizes, and some were finding it increasingly difficult to get sponsorship. They were, however, unanimous about the attitude of artists, which was always described as positive (except for "a few minor gripes") and appreciative.

It is tempting, but impossible, to examine in detail the competitions to which these replies relate, but I will survey briefly the development in Phase 3 of the types of community groups mentioned in relation to Phase 2. A few of the universities used art competitions in enterprising ways. The *Monash University Art Prize*, offered in 1995 and 1996, was conceived as one aspect of the interface between the teaching institution and the public, and as a way of encouraging excellence among younger artists. It was strongly supported by the Vice Chancellor, who supplied the prize money of $8,000 for the first and $6,000 for the second acquisitive prizes. About twenty young artists who had already demonstrated professional achievement were invited to compete, with the result that the Gallery acquired works which represented current creative practice. [101] An unusual event was the *Concrete Origami Sculpture Competition*, held in 1980, and deriving from

a lecture by Robert Wheen, then a Senior Lecturer in Civil Engineering at the University of Sydney, in which he had described a technique for folding concrete slabs into three dimensional shapes. To attract new applications of the idea, the Concrete Institute of Australia held a competition offering $1,500 in prizes. A varied group of entries was displayed in Australia Square, Sydney, and on the University campus. [102]

Schools have also been ingenious in making use of art competitions. An example in Brisbane was the *Churchie Exhibition of Emerging Art*, with total prize money of $7,000. It has been run since 1986, and, although its aim is to raise funds through sales, it has had a special commitment to the work of young artists which is not necessarily easily saleable.[103] Other successful awards based in schools were the *Illawarra Acquisitive Print Award* begun in 1998 by the Illawarra Grammar School, and the acquisitive *Hutchins School Art Prize* in Hobart, with a prize of $5,000. The annual acquisitive *Kedumba Drawing Award*, based in the Blue Mountains Grammar School, has already been discussed as a commercially sponsored competition because, although based in the school, it is largely sponsored by local commercial interests.

Art competitions continue to be a feature of festivals, and overall there have been at least seventy local festivals, over half of them held in the 1980s and 1990s. About sixty were in country towns, and more than twenty of these in NSW. An illuminating account of festivals in WA, which was produced in 1991 by the Department for the Arts, is probably descriptive of many arts festivals. Most consisted of performances, multicultural displays, sports, parades and occasional crowning of queens. They were held mainly as community events and were often sponsored by Councils. The cultural levels of these festivals have varied greatly. One which is unusual because it is purely cultural is the *Castlemaine State Festival of the Arts*, a ten day event which has been held biennially for 25 years, and is sponsored by Arts Victoria and the local council and university, and by a variety of commercial interests. Its programme covers music, dance, drama and historical studies. [104] It includes the *Dominique Segan Drawing Prize*, which was sponsored by a local family as a commemorative event, and offers a prize of $3,000.[105] An unusual practical feature of the festival is that there is a half refund of fees for works which are not exhibited.

In general those festivals which included art competitions could be regarded as being on a relatively high cultural level. Competitions are presumably a useful component of festivals, because the opening creates an occasion, and the exhibition can remain open continuously. Sales made are encouraging for local artists, and they also bring commissions to the festival organisers.

Art competitions have continued also to be useful for fund raising. For example, the CWA in Tennant Creek held an *Art Award* in 1987 with a major prize of $1,000, sponsored by local business, and the *Tresillian Art Award* in Nedlands, Western Australia, beginning in the 1980s, was based in a community centre. Amnesty International in Sydney offered a prize of a trip to New York plus $5,000 for figurative works in 1991. The *Leonora Prize* in Western Australia was begun by the Shire Education Office to promote local art, and is supported by local citizens and businesses in this goldfields town. Numbers of entries are increasing, and many artists enter repeatedly. Prizes are $1,000 and $500, and organisers claim that about 45% of entries are sold.[106] In the remote town of Cossack in the Pilbara region of northern Western Australia a member of the community began the *Cossack Acquisitive Art Awards* in 1993 to raise funds for restoring the town's heritage buildings. Although, to quote the Survey form, it is "staged in the land of the Phillistines", the competition was assessed as being an eagerly awaited event, popular with sponsors, and educative for local artists starved of arts exposure.[107] It has developed quickly. In 2000 the competition offered a prize of $30,000, and was reported as having attracted entries from outside Western Australia.[108] It was judged by Robert Juniper, a painter and teacher who had won several prizes, and the winner was Tom Gleghorn, who had won over thirty prizes, mainly in the 1950s and 1960s.

A number of clubs have made themselves patrons of art competitions for varying reasons. The Yorick Club in Melbourne ran an art prize from 1953 to 1963. In 1966 it was subsumed by the Savage Club, an affluent social club with a professional membership which included artists. It began an invitation *Art Prize for Contemporary Drawing* in 1985, funded by a levy on members to cover expenses and to provide the $5,000 prize - a kind of mandatory patronage. The prize was later transferred to regional galleries. [109]

Service clubs have made effective practical use of art competitions. One of the veterans, the *Camberwell Rotary Art Show* in Melbourne, now offers prize money of about $35,000 for works of art in various forms, and receives large numbers of entries, a third of which are from interstate. Works must, however, be "traditional and representational", a formula which seems to produce good sales.[110] A number of other Rotary Clubs and some other service clubs have developed similar schemes from the 1980s onwards.

With few exceptions this varied category of sponsors was concerned with amateur artists, and it provided them with a form of encouragement which almost certainly was not available otherwise, and often exhibited their work in their own area. Some universities and schools were exceptions, because their competitions had a serious purpose of acquisition, and their acquisitions brought a form of recognition to the artists concerned. They and the competition exhibitions also put contemporary art before audiences who may have had some special affinity with it. Competitions for fund raising and festivals appealed to popular audiences, and had the advantage of displaying art objects in informal situations, and suggesting that buying them was a practical possibility.

ENDNOTES

1 VAS. Minutes of Council Meetings, 5 Mar. 1986; ibid. 5 Dec. 1984.

2 Community Printmakers Murwillumbah operated independently of the Regional Gallery. Its prize of $2,000 in 1997 attracted some 150 entries. Although its organiser was ambivalent about the ethics of competition, it continued to hold them because they provided a focus and a stimulus for group activities (Baartz Interview 1998; Survey of art competitions, 1997). Other new competitions held by art societies in country NSW included the *Hunter Valley Regional Artists' Competition*, 1987- ; the *Kiama Art Society Art Exhibition*, 1981- ; the *Moree Art Society Annual Exhibition*, 1991, and the *Oberon Art Society Exhibition*, 1991. New competitions in Queensland included the *Hervey Bay Art Society Annual Art Exhibition*, the *Mount Isa Society Exhibition* in 1993, and the *Rockhampton Art Competition and Exhibition*, 1997. In Victoria, the Echuca Art Group began *Annual Art Exhibitions* in 19944, and the *Geelong Art Society Indoor/Outdoor Art Show* began in 1991.

3 Stella Curran, *Sun, Sea and Shadows, The Redcliffe Art contest and Art Society 1957 to 1996*, Stella Curran, Scarborough, Queensland, 1998, p. 92.

4 Survey of Competitions, 1997.

5 *Art Gallery of NSW Act 1980*, No. 65, 1980.

6 AGNSW TM 22 May 1981.

7 ibid. 27 Nov. 1981.

8 ibid. 15 Aug. 1986; ibid. 29 Nov. 1989.

9 ibid. 26 Feb. 1990.

10 Michelle Ronksley, 'Portrait of the Archibald', *Art Monthly Australia*, May 1994, no. 69, p. 23.

11 Brian Hoad, 'Shock and distress at the Gallery', *Bulletin*, 10 Mar. 1981, p. 77.

12 'Aims and Objectives', *AGNSW Annual Report 1997*, p. 17.

13 *Daily Telegraph Souvenir Guide 2000 Archibald Prize*, Daily Telegraph, Sydney, 2000.

14 ibid. 29 Nov. 1989.

15 ibid. 27 July, 1989; ibid. 25 Oct. 1989.

16 Survey of competitions, 1997.

17 *Australian Financial Review Magazine*, June 1997, p. 14.

18 Michael Bogle, 'Paradigms Lost', *Art Monthly Australia*, Mar. 1991, p 18.

19 Katrina Strickland, 'Award a Victory for Contemporary art', *Australian*, 4 Dec. 1997, p. 6.

20 Brook Turner, 'Seppelt more than a prize', *Australian Financial Review*, 7 Nov. 1997.

21 *Joan and Peter Clemenger Triennial Exhibition of Contemporary Australian Art 23 Feb. - 16 May 1993*, NGV, 1993.

22 Robert Rooney, 'Contemporaneity just isn't what it used to be', *Australian*, 16 Sep. 1993, p. 13.

23 Susan McCulloch, 'Winner thanks God for "serious" art prize, *Australian*, 15 Mar. 1996, p. 3.

24 Simeon Kronenberg, 'Too close for comfort?', *Spin Out*, 16 April, 1999, p. 11.

25 John McPhee, 'Colin and Cecily Rigg Craft Award'. *Pottery in Australia*, vol. 33, no. 3, Spring 1994, p. 60.

26 *Cicely and Colin Rigg Craft Award*, 1997, NGV, 1997.

27 Greg Burchall, 'Changing the way we see art', *Age*, 7 Aug. 1996, p. B4.

28 Raymond Gill, 'New art prize to be the richest', *Age*, 2 Aug. 1996, p. B3.

29 Ericsson sponsors Australia's richest contemporary arts prize, *Ericsson Contact Magazine*, No 33, April 1997.

30 Rowena Stretton, 'How installations have made the art beat faster', *Financial Review* , 30 May 1997, p. 23.

31 Rebecca Lancashire, 'A Work of art that is one out of the box... but the Premier trumpets another', *Age*, 4 June 1997, p. 41.

32 'Director's Foreword', Contempora5 Catalogue 1997, p 7.

33 'Message from the Premier', Contempora5 Catalogue 1999, p. 4.

34 Eric Shanes, 'Power over the artist, Turner prizes and modern "Dictators of Art"', *Apollo*, October, 1995, p. 30. Adrian Searle, 'Turner again', *Artforum International*, Feb. 1995, p. 27.

35 *MOMA Media Release*, 1998 Lowenstein Sharp Arts 21 Fellow Shortlist Announced. Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Melbourne, 1998. Susan McCulloch, 'Business backs cure for the mid-career blues', *Australian*, 16 Aug. 1996, p. 17.

36 Survey of Competitions, 1997.

37 West Interview, 1998.

38 Peter Timms, 'Big little winners', *Herald-Sun* (Melb.), 26 July 1994, p. 37.

39 'Warringah Art Prize', *Report to Community Resources Committee Meeting on 28 May 1996*. Attachment to *Minutes of a Warringah Council Meeting on 28 May 1996*.

40 Survey of competitions, 1997.

41 Holliday Interview, 1997.

42 Survey of competitions, 1997.

43 In Sydney suburbs, the competitions held by the Municipalities of Lane Cove, Ryde and Warringah were among those which survived into the early 1990s. Auburn and Bankstown seem to have held a competition once only, and competitions in Cootamundra, Camden, Gosford and the City of Lake Macquarie were held for only a few years. In Victoria, Geelong, which had already had prizes for prints, began a *Contemporary Art Prize* in 1996. The *Hugh Williamson Prize* in Ballarat offered a major prize of $15,000 and prizes of $4,000 each for an emerging female artist and an emerging male artist. Competitions run by Shires in Queensland included the *Hinchinbrook Acquisitive Art Competition*, beginning in 1981 with a main prize of $1,000, and the *Pine Rivers Shire Council Art Prize*, begun in 1993 to give local artists an opportunity to exhibit, and which, by 1996 had eight categories and a total of $24,000 prize money. (Survey of Competitions, 1997) The Shires of Moreton, Emerald, Gatton, Laidley and Widgee all began competitions during the 1990s, with prizes ranging from $2,500 to $500.

Examples of new competitions in WA were two acquisitive prizes - the *City of Bayswater Art Exhibition and Award*, 1991- , and the *City of Waneroo Art Award*, 1996-, offering five prizes of $500 to encourage local and State artists. (Survey of Competitions, 1997) Country awards included the *Shinju Matsiro Art Award* in Broome, begun in 1991 with a prize of $1,500, the *Kimberley Art Prize* of $1,000 in Derby, and the *Narrogin Classic Art Prize* in 1991. The City of *Hobart Art Prize* is open to nation-wide entrants, but also offers a non-acquisitive prize for artists and craftspeople.

44 Simon Elliott, 'Jack Manton Prize', *A and A*, Spring 1987, vol. 25, no. 1, p. 44.

45 Peter Cochrane, '$190,000 to slow Art's decline', *SMH* 19 Dec. 1986, p. 2; Arthur McIntyre, 'A Shower of Gold', *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 13, Aug. 1989, cover.

46 'Interest hots up over the Doug Moran Prize', *Australian Artist*, vol. 3. no. 9, March 1987, p. 4.

47 Lenore Nicklin, 'Patronage and the Face of art', *Bulletin*, 18 Oct. 1988,p. 21; Diana Hallowes, 'A Great moment for Australian artists...', *Australian Artist*, vol. 5, no. 5, Nov. 1988, p. 16.

48 Timothy Potts, 'Director's Foreword', *Doug Moran Portrait Prize* 1998, [Catalogue], p. 6.

49 The conditions of the competition are simpler than those of the Archibald Prize - the requirement is that the portrait must be executed from life, that it must be in traditional style, and that the subject must be an Australian resident.

50 Doug Moran, 'Patron's Foreword', *The Doug Moran National Portrait Prize 1996* [Catalogue], 1996.

51 For example, in 1990 the *Bulletin* charged Moran with rewarding conformity rather than encouraging creativity, and spoke of the cultural cringe of importing judges (Lenore Micklin, 'Portrait of traditional man with pots of money', *Bulletin* 13 Nov. 1990, p. 44). The SMH described the entries as offering no insight and no endeavour, but later saw the *Prize* as being like a bingo ticket dangled over a sea of hopeful artists (Christopher Allen, 'Needed urgently: a rebirth of the art of portraiture', *SMH* 22 Dec. 1990, p 40; Felicity Fenner, 'Is the Moran worth prizing?', *SMH* 12 Dec. 1992, p. 52); Terri Dodd, 'Robert Hannaford wins the 1990 Doug Moran Prize', *Australian Artist*, No 79, Jan. 1991, p 44). Another writer claimed that, unlike the Moran Prize, the Moët & Chandon award was totally misguided in its terms of reference. (Jeff Makin, 'Ahead of the field', *Herald -Sun* 9 Nov. 1998, p. 97.)

52 *Samstag, University of South Australia*, 1997.

53 Ken Bolton, 'First Samstag exhibition', *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 61, July 1993. Another travelling scholarship offering some opportunities to artists is the Marten Bequest, begun in about 1991. It grants a scholarship of $18,000 annually to a student in one of nine areas of the arts, including painting and sculpture.

54 Burns Interview 1997.

55 Francis Farrelly & Martin Hirons, 'Assessing the worth of corporate sponsorship', *Thomson's Business-to-Business Review*, Sydney, Aug. 1995, p. 23.

56 J. B. Leslie, Managing Director of Mobil, Speech at the 3rd Annual General Meeting of the Australian Gallery Directors' Council, Feb. 1977.

57 'The Business in the Arts Awards', *Imprint* No. 1, 1979.

58 'Amateur and professional artists alike rush to enter...Faber-Castell Prize for Drawing', *Australian Artist*, Dec. 1986.

59 Survey of competitions, 1997.

60 'Ipex Plumbing Award', *Art Monthly Australia*, No. 22, July 1989, p. 21.

61 Bruce Stannard, 'Canvasses billow for new maritime award', *Bulletin*, 4 June, 1985, p. 81. The Prize was given annually until 1992, when the firm was taken over by P. and O. which continued it for a few years.

62 Macworld and Panoramic Publishing offered prizes of $20,000 and $8,500 respectively in the 1990s. *'Money for visual artists'*, NAVA, Sydney, 1991.

63 Examples are the *Blue Circle Southern Cement Purchase* in Geelong in 1985; the *Houghton Wines Prize* for Sculpture in WA in 1987; The *Capita Fine Arts Grant* given by the Capita Financial Group in Sydney in 1987; the *Caltex National Scholarship for Women* ($50,000 for postgraduate study overseas) in 1993; the *Nescafe Big Break* and the *Roselands Annual Art Show* at a shopping centre in Sydney in 1991. The State Government Insurance Office in Queensland offered art awards from about 1979, and in 1991 the major prize was $2,500 and $12,500 was spent on acquisitions. Almost 1,000 entries were received, and there was regional judging, and regional exhibitions to show the paintings widely.

64 Lindsay Foyle, 'And the winner is...', *Bulletin*, 20 Nov. 1990, pp. 76ff.

65 *The Stanleys Black and White Artists Awards*, 1989, Kemsley Press, Welby, 1990, p. 1. Black and white artists originally became members of the Society of Artists in Sydney in the 1890s, but later formed
their own club.

66 *The ANZ Bicentennial Art Commissions*, ANZ Banking Group Ltd., Melbourne, 1987.

67 'A Message from Moët & Chandon', *Moët & Chandon Australian Art Foundation Touring Exhibition, 1988.* [Catalogue] 1988.

68 Susan McCulloch, 'Bubbling over with talent and relevance', *Bulletin*, 3 Feb. 1987, p. 53.

69 Susan McCulloch, 'An Art Award that keeps on giving', *Australian*, 16 Feb. 1996, p.15.

70 Colin Simpson, 'Challenging winner - to corner cutters', *Bulletin*, 27 Feb. 1996, p. 82.

71 *Celebration of a decade and 1997 Touring Exhibition*, [Catalogue] Moët & Chandon, Box Hill, Victoria, 1997; *Moët & Chandon Art Acquisitions 1986-1996*, Moët & Chandon, Box Hill, Victoria, 1997.

72 *RFC Glass Prize 1997* [Catalogue], RFC, Sydney, 1997, p. 6.

73 BP Australia & Artworkz Promotions; 'Artworkz One', [Catalogue], Melbourne, 1989.

74 A.P.M. Acquisitive Art Award, 1985 for paintings, 1985.

75 'Australian Paper: AMCOR Paper Awards 1995: an exhibition of works of art on paper and with paper by nine invited artists'. Westpac Galleries, Melbourne, 1995.

76 Giles Auty, 'A Case of jury duty', *Weekend Australian* 5-6 April, 1997, p. 13.

77 *Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Peninsula Tourism Profile*, SA Tourist Commission, Adelaide, 1996.

78 *Kedumba Drawing Award 1993*, Fairmont Resort Leura, [Catalogue] 1993.

79 Joanna Mendelssohn, 'Kedumba Drawing Award', *Australian*, 6 Sep. 1996, p. 15.

80 Margaretta Pos, 'Blundstone Art Prize welcome News', *Mercury*, 25 Feb. 1995, p.31.

81 Shelley Interview, 1997.

82 Survey of Competitions, 1997.

83 Those held included the *St Kilda Postcard Show*, which offered a prize of $2,000 for designs to be used commercially, and the *Pearl Jewellery Design Award* offered by Shinju Matsuri Inc in Broome in 1996.

84 *Association of Sculptors of Victoria: Survey, 1933-1985.* The Association, Melbourne, 1985.

85 Meszaros Interview, 1998.

86 *Melbourne City Council Public Art Guidelines for successful commissioning*, Melbourne, 1998.

87 *City of Sydney Public Art Policy*, 1994.

88 *Corporate support for the arts, a discussion paper*, Australia Council, Sydney, 1986.

89 *Corporate support for the Arts 1996, Report of a national business survey with comparisons to earlier surveys in 1986, 1989 and 1993*, Australia Council, 1996.

90 Roseanne Martorella, ed., *Art and business, an international perspective on sponsorship.* Praeger, Westport, Conn, 1996.

91 Rebecca Lancashire, 'Winner Hall's natty and clever installation verges on the twee', *Age*, 4 June 1997, p. C3.

92 Blake Minutes, 14 Feb. 1985; ibid. 19 Aug. 1991.

93 ibid. 3 Apr. 1995.

94 Chris Peterson (Chairman of the Blake Society), 'Religion in unfamiliar art', *Australian* 21 Dec. 1995, p. 10.

95 Bruce James, 'Holy Ghost goes missing at the Blake Prize', *Age*, 14 Dec. 1994, p. 23.

96 Albequerque Interview 1998. It is noted that, although the prize went into abeyance after 1996 because of lack of sponsorship, it was revived in 2000.

97 '$2,000 Art Prize decided', *Border Watch*, 10 Mar. 1998, p. 16. The Hugh Ramsay Religious Art Award, based in Ave Maria College, Essendon, is another prize which "offers artists the opportunity to express their faith in religious terms". It gives a prize of $2,000.

98 Grace Interview, 2000.

99 *Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial Commemorative Booklet, Canberra, 3rd October, 1992*, Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial Committee, Canberra, 1992; *Australian Service Nurses National Memorial Design Competition Conditions*, National Capital Authority, Canberra, 1997.

100 *The Third Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Art Award, the Art of Place 1996*, [Catalogue]. Australian Heritage Commission. 1996.

101 *Monash University Art Prize 1995, Inaugural Exhibition and Award* [Catalogue], 1995.

102 Wheen Interview, 1999.

103 Survey of competitions, 1997.

104 *12th Castlemaine State Festival Program*, 1999.

105 *Dominique Segan Castlemaine State Festival Drawing Prize*, 1999. [Prospectus].

106 Survey of competitions, 1997.

107 ibid.

108 Natalie O'Brien, 'Town strikes gold again as art award Mecca', *Weekend Australian* 29-30 July, 2000, p. 11; Survey of competitions, 1997.

109 Joseph Johnson, 'Laughter and the Love of friends, a Centenary History of the Melbourne Savage Club 1894-1994, and a History of the Yorick Club 1868-1966'. Savage Club, Melbourne, 1994.

110 Survey of competitions, 1997.

CHAPTER 5

THE PROCESS OF JUDGEMENT

The determination of the winner is the climax and the central mystery of an art competition. It is understood by all participants that the judge's decision is to be accepted. The judging process which will produce this decision is therefore crucial, and the suspense which precedes it and the reactions which follow are important elements of the whole operation. In most cases the task of judging is deputed to others by the sponsors of the competition, and the judge or judges therefore have a responsibility to both sponsors and competitors. Laurie Thomas, Director of the QAG, when inviting the artist James Gleeson to judge the H. C. Richards Memorial and the L.J. Harvey Memorial prizes which are based in the Gallery, wrote "*... as you know, the standard of the competition depends a great deal on the faith that painters have in the judge*". [1]

There are, however, no professional judges of art. Art professionals such as artists, art critics, art curators, art historians and art teachers may be involved in different ways with the assessment of works of art by a variety of artists, but they do not usually have the task of singling out one which is better than all the others. There are no general rules which can be applied in comparing the work of a number of competing artists. In the 1950's, as the result of a proposal from one of the artists' societies represented on the Committee, suggested conditions for the guidance of organisers of competitive art conditions were drawn up by the Visual Arts Committee of the Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO.[2] It is significant that these conditions are concerned mainly with questions of control and responsibility, although they do suggest that the subject of works of art should be left to the artist's discretion. In relation to adjudication they make two suggestions - firstly that competition organisers should request advice from leading art societies or National Art Galleries as to the persons who would best serve their purpose, and secondly that the names of adjudicators should be made known when the competition is announced. Clearly, the Committee was not prepared to suggest guidelines for the actual judging, leaving this responsibility to the judges themselves.

Organisers of different kinds of art competitions have differing expectations from the process of judging. In the previous chapters I have discussed art competitions in relation to types of sponsors, and here I will consider the arrangements for judging which have been applied and the judges who have been employed in relation to the same main categories - those which have been sponsored respectively by the artists themselves, by public art galleries and local government bodies, by individuals, by commercial enterprises and by groups which have used competitions to promote ideas, as well as by other sponsors within the community.

Competitions sponsored by the artists

It seems reasonable to assume that the arrangements which artists' societies have made for judging their own competitions reflect their conception of the most effective way of making a comparative assessment of art objects in relation to the purpose for which the competitions might have been held. As is appropriate for associations of professionals, at least in the major societies in the capital cities, judging seems generally to have been carried out by members. For example, the professional NSW Society of Artists, having decided in 1935 to make an annual award for the best work of the year in any medium, decided also that three judges were to be elected by special ballot to make this award.[3] The first three judges were Sydney Ure Smith, Elioth Gruner and John D. Moore. Two years before, a sculpture student who was an applicant for the Travelling Scholarship had complained that although the regulation stated that judging had been by artists from other states, only one artist had acted as a judge, and that she felt that a sculptor should have been one of the judges. Apparently the Society could not afford to bring more than one judge from another state.[4] Later, the Society seems to have had a special hanging and judging committee of six members, with the President an ex-officio member. The RAS of NSW began giving prizes for young artists in the 1950s, and in 1988 awarded for the first time the *Will Ashton Memorial Medal*. Judging arrangements do not seem to have been advertised. Members presumably officiated as judges for the prizes which it offered in the 1990s.

In the VAS, the comparable society in Victoria, regular awards were originally judged by members, excluding non-exhibiting Council Members, a hard-line policy which was confirmed in 1955.[5] More

recently, the Council appointed single judges, such as Eric Thake, Charles Bush and John Brack, or committees of judges, to judge specially sponsored prizes. They also made some gestures to the sponsor - for example, during the 1960s, the Lord Mayor was one of the judges for the *Lord Mayor's Acquisitive Prize*, and other sponsors such as the firm Applied Chemicals were represented on the Committee. A feature of the Society's programme is that an *Artist of the Year* is chosen annually. This is done in two stages. Some artists who are selected by vote on the quality of their work exhibited at the Ordinary Exhibitions, can enter up to three works for the Award Exhibition, where the winner is again chosen by vote, so that the result represents a consensus of opinion on contemporary painting.

At its first exhibition in 1939, the CAS Victoria invited Gino Nibbi, an art writer and bookshop proprietor, to be the judge for a donated prize. The winning painting was to be presented to the NGV. He divided the prize between James Gleeson and Eric Thake - one surrealist and one abstract painting. Subsequently judges do not usually seem to have been named, although in 1963 it was advertised that John Brack would be the judge.[6] A list of more recent judges shows that the majority were local artists, who were probably members, but that they included academic and critic Patrick McCaughey, art historian Bernard Smith, sculptor Lenton Parr and curator Robert Lindsay, suggesting that the Society was fostering versatility. In South Australia, the judging panel for the CAS *Cornell Prize* consisted of the President and two others nominated by the Committee. In 1957 these were Father Michael Scott of the Blake Society, and Ivor Francis, an active member of the CAS.

The CAS in NSW usually used panels of members such as Henry Salkauskas, Guy Warren and Elwyn Lynn, but did not limit itself to these. It selected a variety of expertise, including Wallace Thornton, art critic of the SMH, curators Daniel Thomas and Tony Tuckson, Lucy Swanton, Director of the Macquarie Galleries, and John Reed (President of the CAS in Victoria). The judges in 1964, Nancy Borlase, John Coburn and Tony Tuckson, capitalised on the experience of judging by discussing their impressions of the exhibition at a Branch meeting.[7]

The Print Council, based in Victoria, has used panels of judges representing a variety of expertise and backgrounds. The first, in 1967,

consisted of collector and patron Colonel Aubrey Gibson, artist John Olsen, and Ballarat Gallery Director, James Mollison.[8] In 1968 the selection was done at the AGNSW, and in 1969 in South Australia. The last prize, in 1973, was judged by John Brack, Udo Sellbach and R. G. Appleyard.[9] All of these awards seem to have been judged in a way which was similar to that of other competitions being held in the same period - the artists apparently did not vary the pattern.

These competitions represent the judging arrangements of the major and more professional art societies. They do not include other less professional societies throughout the country and the competitions which they run. These offer local artists opportunities for exhibition and possible sales of their work, and are likely to be of interest to the community. The judging is doubly important in these competitions, because it establishes the standard of the competition itself, as well as determining the winners. Moreover, in the final analysis it is usually the element of competition and the judging associated with it which creates much of the interest of the event. These less professional societies often have no suitably qualified members to draw on for judging, and it is therefore essential for them to find judges externally.

It is not always possible to find out who the judges were and how they were selected. Two sources have been used here. The first is the lists of competitions and prizes which were published in most issues of *Art and Australia* from 1963 to 1993, and which usually mention judges in the context of the announcements of winners.[10] It is incomplete because not all competitions, and especially those of this type, are covered, and not all winners are announced. The second is the selective Survey of Art Competitions which was carried out in 1997, and which asked for names of judges on the first and last occasion when the competition was held. Again, this information is far from complete because only a small proportion of competitions was surveyed, and because some of the respondents did not know the names of the early judges. Nevertheless, it is interesting to look selectively at the judges who officiated in some of these amateur competitions.

The examples which follow are mainly based on responses to the Survey,[11] and they suggest that it was easier to get the services of well known judges in the early days, perhaps because societies were then relatively more affluent and could afford travel expenses, and perhaps

because country visits were more attractive to judges. For example, the Tumut Society, begun in 1957, had as judges the curators Hal Missingham, Daniel Thomas and Tony Tuckson, and subsequently artists including Leonard French, William Dargie, and Roland Wakelin. The *Berrima District Art Prize*, which began in the 1950s also employed Daniel Thomas, and artists Eva Kubbos, Robert Norling and Wallace Thornton, as well as critic Mervyn Horton. The Campbelltown *Festival of Fisher's Ghost Competition* was judged by painters John Henshaw and Peter Laverty and sculptor Tom Bass.

The Art Group in Beaumaris, a suburb of Melbourne, had its paintings judged by artists who included Fred Williams, and painter and teacher Alan Warren, and also by Patrick McCaughey, critic, academic and gallery director. The *Townsville Art Society Prize*, which later became part of the Pacific Festival, invited as judges a number of teachers and curators such as Leon Paroissien and Hal Missingham, and artists such as Hollie, who had herself won the Moët & Chandon prize.

A number of other societies such as the Echuca Art Group, begun in 1954, the City of Ryde Art Society, 1961, the Burnie Coastal Art Group, begun in 1979, the Printmakers Association of Western Australia, also begun in the late 1970s, the Lake Cargellico Arts and Crafts Society and Community Printmakers of Murwillumbah, which started in 1990, list judges whose names do not appear in encyclopedias and dictionaries of art and artists. They were presumably residents of the area with some relevant expertise. The Echuca Group's first exhibition was, for example, judged by the local schoolteacher.

Judging by only one judge seems to have been much more common than judging by a panel, probably because of the problems of assembling a panel, particularly in country areas. Artists or artist/teachers seem to have been the most popular judges, and they and other judges were generous in travelling to adjudicate. Local competitions had the benefit of informality, and adjudication by local artists, particularly in smaller competitions, would have added to the feeling that the exhibition was a community event. Overall, competitions run by artists themselves must represent a certain sense of camaraderie, as well as rivalry. The judging should reflect, or help to develop and explain standards. It should therefore, provide a focus for

the activities of the individual artists, and it should also enhance the concept of the artist as an expert.

Competitions held in State public art galleries

The major public galleries in each State are the focus of expertise within that State, and they also the most visited art institutions. The art competitions which they administer are therefore likely to be influential. It is ironic, therefore, that in almost all cases these competitions are subject to constraints which affect the process and the final result of judging, and which were imposed, consciously or unconsciously, by the benefactors who originally sponsored them.

The AGNSW has been a pioneer among public art galleries in its involvement with art competitions. It has assumed this role largely because of the bequests for the administration of which it has accepted responsibility, and which provide for art competitions which are virtually perpetual. They illustrate very effectively the complexities of judging competitions, especially when adjudication is placed in the hands of a continually changing group of people, most of whom have no real expertise.

The first and the most enduring of these competitions is the *Wynne Prize*. The only guidance given by Richard Wynne, was that the Deed of gift provided that the decision of the merits or nature of the painting or sculpture was to be arrived at and finally settled by the Trustees of the AGNSW.[12] Wynne had virtually no alternative but to bequeath this responsibility to the Trustees. The AGNSW was the acknowledged institutional centre of art in Sydney, with a far more public role than the School of Arts, and the Trustees controlled it. They were a firmly entrenched group, some of them having been associated with the Gallery since 1874, when they were members of an administrative committee appointed for the formation of "a gallery of art".[13]

This was the first time that the Trustees had been given a task of this kind, although they themselves had actually staged and judged some competitions for water colour drawings of picturesque scenery in NSW, with the idea of forming a special collection,[14] and they often made decisions on purchases of paintings from exhibitions. They accepted the new responsibility without comment, and the Minutes of their

meetings reveal no significant discussion about how it should be carried out.

The scheme which they developed for selecting the winner had two phases. Firstly they noted what they considered to be eligible works from the exhibitions of the Art Society and the Society of Artists of NSW which they had inspected during the year, and secondly they advertised for entries. In the first year the entries received in response to the advertisement consisted of sixteen oil paintings, five casts and eight figure models. The eligible items were assessed and the decision was made at a general meeting of Trustees. The prize was awarded to a work by Walter Withers which had been shown at the Society's exhibition and purchased by the Trustees.[15] It is not clear how the field as a whole was considered, although on more than one future occasion the decision had to be deferred until works could be obtained from the owners or the artist for further inspection.[16] It is clear, however, that the selection of "eligible" items was made by the few Trustees who inspected art society exhibitions. There was not usually a full attendance of Trustees at the general meeting which made the final choice of the winner, so that the decisions probably did not represent the view of the whole group of Trustees. Most of the winners were paintings which had been noted at the art society exhibitions. This might have been discouraging to artists from other states, and it would also have been disappointing that there was no general exhibition of entries.

This system of selection and decision continued until about 1939. It was not always straightforward - for example, in 1930 "exhaustive voting" was necessary to decide between works by Gruner and Lister Lister. The latter was a Trustee and so could not be present at the meeting. At a meeting of Trustees in February 1930 it was suggested that the pictures for the *Archibald* and *Wynne Prizes* should be judged by special judges, but this obviously could not be approved because of the provisions of the Bequests.[17] Decisions about the *Wynne* awards were made at General Meetings, unlike those for the *Archibald Prize*, for which Special Meetings were held.

There was a move to formalise the procedures for the *Wynne* in 1933 by a set of regulations which included provision to invite the authors of works noted by the Trustees at exhibitions during the year to submit these, and also provision for voting as in the *Archibald Prize*.[18] The two

prizes had already come together, as far as the Trustees were concerned, at a Special Meeting in January 1928, when the entries for the *Archibald Prize* were inspected and unanimous agreement was reached on the award, after which it was decided to award the *Wynne Art Prize* to a cast by Rayner Hoff, the first award for sculpture.[19]

At least up to the end of the 1930's, the *Wynne* award seems to have gone consistently to painters who were already established, or who had quickly became established through winning it. There were several recurring winners, notably Hans Heysen, with nine wins, and Elioth Gruner and Lister Lister, each with seven, and Walter Withers with two. Rayner Hoff was the only sculptor to win the prize.

The status of the National Art Gallery had been confirmed in 1899 by the Library and Art Gallery Act, which nominated eleven Trustees and provided for two artists as additional Trustees.[20] From the angle of judging, this should have provided a wider range of views, although conversely it might have added to the difficulties of reaching decisions. There was no limitation on the term of office of the Trustees, which meant that entrenched viewpoints were likely to persist. Several Trustees served for very long periods, including W. Lister Lister, one of the artist members, who was a Trustee for forty-three years, during which period he won the *Wynne Prize* seven times.

In 1921 the Trustees were confronted with another competition which they were required to judge on behalf of a benefactor. This was the *Archibald Prize*, endowed by Jules Francois Archibald in his last years a Trustee of the Gallery. The annual Prize was to be for "the best portrait preferentially of some man or woman distinguished in Art Letters Science or Politics painted by an artist resident in Australia during the preceding twelve months" and was to be administered by the Trustees.[21] Whatever hidden agenda may have been behind Archibald's intention of associating his name permanently with a sequence of portraits of distinguished people painted by distinguished artists, the task of the Trustees was simply to identify each year the "best" portrait entered, subject to the "preferential" qualification. As they had done with the *Wynne Prize*, they seem to have accepted their new responsibility without hesitation.

Adjudication on behalf of *Archibald* appears to have caused them more anxiety than adjudication on behalf of Wynne, perhaps because they were less accustomed to assessing portraits than landscapes, perhaps also because of the implications of the preferential clause, or perhaps because a feeling of responsibility to a former colleague. In any case, they took the precaution of clarifying some aspects of the bequest's wording with the Crown Solicitor before the first competition.[22]

Unlike the *Wynne* decisions, which at this time appear to have been simply a matter of general agreement, the winner for the first *Archibald Prize* in 1921 was chosen by open voting, a ballot having been suggested but rejected by the meeting. The decision in the case of the second award, for 1922, was unanimously in favour of W. B. McInnes who had also won the first award.[23] In both cases the portraits were of reasonably distinguished people, and so were consistent with the preferential clauses, but in the following years there were occasions when these clauses were overlooked by both artists and judges. There were also, as there had been in the *Wynne Prize*, several cases of recurring awards to particular painters. For example, between 1921 and 1956, McInnes had won on six occasions, John Longstaff on five, William Dargie on eight and Ivor Hele on five. These totals were all the more remarkable because the number of entries was now climbing. It had reached 182 in 1956 and continued to increase. Although it seems logical to assume that the chances of an individual winning several times would therefore have been decreasing, this was not necessarily the case, particularly since a number of artists submitted multiple entries. Admittedly, there were several cases where new artists such as H. Hankey, Norah Heysen, William Dobell and Judy Cassab won the Prize, but the recurring wins by established artists made it clear that the Trustees did not envisage using the Prize to provide encouragement to developing artists.

In 1955 the CAS made a public comment on the judging by making its own awards for the *Wynne* and *Archibald Prizes*. The judges chosen were artist and critic Paul Haefliger, artist James Gleeson and the Reverend Felix Arnott, a prominent member of the Blake Society. Both awards went to Michael Kmit. [24]

From time to time reservations about the judging process surfaced at Trustees' meetings. As early as 1927 Sulman had proposed amendment

of the terms of the Archibald Bequest because he said that, as it was being administered, it did not carry out Archibald's intentions. It was, however, decided to take no action.[25] Later there were discussions about voting by ballot as against open voting, and about the preferential clause. In 1936 there was a special meeting which accepted a *Collation of rules governing awarding of the Archibald Prize*. These rules not only outlined what the judging procedure should be at the Special Meetings, but they also tried to invoke the presence of Archibald himself by requiring that a copy of the Will was to be laid on the table and that the salient clauses of the Will should be read out, especially the preferential clause.[26] In spite of, or perhaps because of, this concern with Archibald's wishes, the Trustees now made some decisions which aroused public criticism. The first was the award of the prize to Nora Heysen for a portrait of the wife of a Belgian diplomat.[27] It was sensational, both because it was the first award to a woman, and because it disregarded the preferential clause. It sparked off lively press comment. Two years later the position was reversed when the Trustees were criticised for awarding the prize yet again to one of Dargie's academic portraits.[28] The award of the 1943 *Prize* was even more controversial. The Trustees, who now included a greater proportion of members such as Mary Alice Evatt, Sydney Ure Smith and Lionel Lindsay, who were in sympathy with contemporary art, departed from their usual support for the conventional by voting the prize to William Dobell's portrait of Joshua Smith. This bold decision brought the Trustees both criticism and congratulation. It also resulted in a court action by unsuccessful competitors. The Trustees were vindicated when the plaintiffs' claim that the painting was a caricature rather than a portrait was dismissed,[29] but the case was to continue to present them with challenges, not the least of which was lively and lasting interest in the prize by the public and the press. Dobell himself potentially achieved the status of a judge for a short time when he was made a Trustee in the following year, but avoided being involved in the decisions. Awards of the Prize now vacillated between the conventional and the less conventional, with occasional excursions into the innovative.

After the Special Meeting of January 1946, held to make and announce decisions on the Prizes for 1945 there was a discussion of the judging arrangements for the *Wynne Prize*, evidently resulting from the procedure of selecting from society exhibitions. The outcome was that

it was decided that only works actually sent in would be voted on, although it was still possible for Trustees to nominate works for consideration.[30] This was a fairer arrangement, since the responsibility for submitting work rested completely with the artist, rather than partly with the Trustees.

The new *Art Gallery of NSW Act* of 1958 was intended to make the Gallery an independent institution. It also brought important changes for the Trustees, whose selection now became more accountable. Even more important, their number was increased to thirteen. They had four year tenure and were divided into two groups, one of which was to be reviewed biennially. This meant that both change and continuity were built into the structure of the group. On the other hand, decision making on highly specialised matters by a group of this size, whether or not it was expert, was likely to be a complex process. Except for the two artist members, the Trustees were generally not art experts, although they were presumably interested in art. They were chosen mainly for the professional skills which they could bring to the Gallery.

In this situation, it was inevitable that the process of judging would become more formalised. There was already a system by which each Trustee inspected all the entries (in 1957 there were 154) and voted for ten preferences. From these votes the Electoral Officer, whose expert help had now become necessary, prepared a list of the top five, and the Trustees voted again on these five to choose the winner.[31] By 1961 the Trustees had again become dissatisfied with the arrangements for selection and hanging of entries for the *Archibald* and *Wynne* competitions, and a special sub-committee was appointed to consider the conditions and to report back to the Trustees.[32] The sub-committee proposed that the Director should make a primary selection of paintings as a basis for consideration by the Trustees. There would then be two ballots by the Trustees - a preferential one for the selection of ten works and a final vote for the winner. The sub-committee also proposed discussion of entries before the final ballot, subject to availability of time, and this attempt to form some group opinion seems to have continued.[33]

The Trustees were unanimous in taking the bold step of announcing that they considered that none of the entries for the 1963 *Prize* was worthy of the award. Although there was a storm of protest, numbers

of entries continued to increase. Especially with such numbers of entries to consider, the Trustees continued to be concerned about the judging procedure, and were probably not consoled by the Electoral Commissioner's advice that it was inevitable that there would be great divergence of choice in the *Archibald* and *Wynne* exhibitions because a small number of Trustees had to choose from a large number of paintings.[34] In fact, there were occasions when, because of the vagaries of the balloting system, the Trustees were surprised at the winner who was announced. As a consequence, yet another system of selection and balloting was introduced in 1975,[35] and again in 1980 there was further consideration of the need to discuss works on the short list before the final ballot.[36]

By this time, the Trustees were willing to make more adventurous choices, including Expressionist and informal portraits, but balanced by returns to the more conventional. They rejected Bloomfield's entry for the 1975 award on the grounds that it was painted from a photograph and not from life[37], but they awarded the prize for 1976 to Brett Whiteley for his almost surrealist self portrait, and also awarded him the *Wynne Prize* for the same year.

In 1980 there was another new Act, mainly concerned with redefining the role of the Gallery and the responsibility of the Director as its chief executive Officer[38] There were again implications for the Trustees, who were now reduced from thirteen to nine, including two artists, and limiting their maximum tenure to twelve years.[39] Although the Director's role was strengthened, the responsibility of the Trustees to judge the *Archibald* and *Wynne Prizes* was unaffected, since this had been formally specified by the benefactors in legal documents. Like Dobell, both Judy Cassab and Kevin Connor, the artists among the new Trustees, had been *Archibald* winners, and they therefore had a special commitment to their responsibilities as judges. The group also included an art historian and others who were collectors, and members were generally younger than in the previous group. It was decided that for the 1980 prize the full Board would view all 250 entries and make a selection for the short list, and that the final choice would be made from this list by open vote.[40] This was done, with the shock result that there was a unanimous decision not to award the prize, in order to improve the standard in the future.[41] In the context of strong public criticism, including a solicitor's letter of complaint asking about the criteria which are applied, and whether a judging panel would be more

equitable, the Trustees discussed the whole situation once again. They could not, however, avoid the conclusion that they were required to judge under the terms of the bequests which they were administering.[42] Minor variations in judging procedure were made again in 1985, but they did not reflect any real changes in the approach to judging, and the Trustees' decisions continued to favour a variety of styles and approaches in the years that followed. The numbers of entries remained buoyant - in 1984 there were 347 for the *Wynne* and 180 for the *Archibald*, and a daunting total of 1461 entries were received for the 1994-95 *Archibald, Wynne* and *Sulman Prizes*.[43]

Because of the balloting system and the need for solidarity, it would have been impossible for the Trustees to give reasons for their choice of winners, even if they had been willing to do so, and it would not have been appropriate for the Director, who was excluded from the decision-making, to comment. Artists and viewers therefore have to work out their own explanations for wins and losses, and for variations in the nature of the winners which were selected.

The basis for judging had clearly now changed significantly from the early years when Archibald's Will was read to the Trustees to remind them of their objective. In press interviews some Trustees gave insights into their reaction to the task of judging, but not to the criteria which they apply. They spoke of it as being enjoyable, exciting, daunting, exhausting and exhilarating and of demanding intense concentration and leading to heated argument.[44] A group of Trustees who had been asked what they looked for in the winning portrait by a SMH critic in 1983 were concerned with expression of personality rather than likeness, and conceded that personal taste was important. Kevin Connor, one of the artist Trustees, refused to comment beyond expressing a wish for excellence. Dr Denise Hickey, a painter and art historian saw the process as essentially one of ranking. She did not specify criteria, but she said that the winning portrait should have vitality which expresses the perception of an idea. Judy Cassab, one of the two artist Trustees, said that, like all the Trustees, she looked for quality, and she insisted that good art should be a transformation - not an imitation. Privately, she spoke of the tremendous responsibility which she felt as a judge, and the importance of the image rather than the technique.[45] Franco Belgiorno-Nettis said that it was not hard to brainwash other colleagues into agreeing with one's views.[46] A cynical

view is that, in general, it seems that decisions are based on a blend of personal taste, technical understanding, a wish to choose paintings which differ from recent winners, and mathematics. There are no real guidelines to be applied, and even the preferential clauses do not loom large in the judging of the *Archibald Prize*. Nevertheless, because it is associated with a national gallery, it is possible that the judging could be regarded as creating some sort of a standard.

It is arguable that the *Archibald* and *Wynne Prizes* are now seen as functions of the AGNSW. They have certainly assumed an important role for it in terms of its budget and public relations, rather than simply being tasks undertaken by it on behalf of benefactors. In practical terms this is largely due to the fact that the Gallery administers both competitions, and exhibits the short-listed works, and also that it now supplies a good proportion of the prize money. An even more important reason is that it is the annual judging of entries which creates much of the excitement of the competition and brings thousands of visitors to the Gallery, and critical comment in the media, and that this judging is carried out at the Gallery by the Gallery's Trustees.

Judging of the *Wynne* and *Archibald Prizes* was made the responsibility of the AGNSW formally. This was not the case with the *Sulman Prize*, which is also based in the AGNSW. The Deed specified that, although appointed by the Trustees, the judge was not to be a Trustee, and was preferably to be brought from another state. No reason for this provision was mentioned in the Minutes or in the press, and one can only speculate whether it was intended to avoid giving the Trustees another task or whether it was felt that a specialist judge would be preferable. The Trustees seem to have had no trouble in choosing judges. At first it was thought to be desirable to have two judges, one an artist and one an architect, the latter being appointed by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects,[47] but this complication was avoided later by an attempt, which does not seem to have continued, to offer the two sections of the prize alternately. On the first occasion no work was considered worthy of the prize by the judges, and later judges asked for some clarification of the requirements.[48] The judges were usually artists, such as Thea Proctor, Elaine Haxton, Russell Drysdale and John Passmore, and in later years included Arthur Boyd, Margaret Olley and Jan Senbergs. Occasionally other kinds of expertise were

represented by judges such as Hal Missingham, Patrick McCaughey and Bernard Smith, and in time the architect member of the panel disappeared. The competition seems to have been efficiently conducted. As specified in the conditions suggested by the Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, the names of judges were announced beforehand. They have reported their decisions to the Trustees promptly and with comments, and their awards have been uncontroversial.[49]

The Trustees have assumed responsibility for the judging of several other competitions. In 1954 they agreed to administer the *Robert Le Gay Brereton Prize*, which was to take the form of an annual competition promoting the study of the art of draughtsmanship.[50] A set of conditions was drawn up, and in accordance with the Deed there were to be three judges, one each from the Royal Art Society, the Australian Watercolour Institute, and the Society of Artists.[51] Apart from the difficulty of getting the judges to view the entries at the same time, this seemed to work satisfactorily each year, until it was noticed in 1987 that the conditions had been varied over several years by using Gallery staff instead of the specified representatives.

In 1959 the Trustees confirmed that they would administer the *Dyason Bequest*, which was intended to provide grants to art students who had won travelling scholarships,[52] and requests were determined promptly on the basis of need by the Trustees at their general meetings. They judged the *Pring Prize* at the time of the *Archibald Prize*,[53] but deputed some of the other judging. For example, Wallace Thornton, Lyndon Dadswell and the Director, who were the judges of the *Gruner Prize* in 1974 reported that the standard of the entries was not high, and by 1980 the panel had become the Director and two curators. The award of the *Basil and Muriel Hooper Scholarships* was originally determined in 1967 by a committee of three artists chosen by the Trustees, but was later taken over by panels of curators.[55] Artists were also invited to judge special competitions such as the *Dobell Prize for Drawing*. The inaugural award had the distinction of being one of the few occasions when Arthur Boyd acted as a judge.[56]

No other State Public Gallery was required to rely on its Trustees for judging to the same extent as the AGNSW, although the *Melrose Prizes* at the AGSA, which were instituted by the chairman of the Trustees,[57]

may have been judged by Trustees. Most galleries have drawn on outside sources of expertise. The AGWA, which had started its own competitions in 1948, presumably relied on its Director to arrange judging, since the Trustees served the Museum and Library also, and the *Annual Reports* do not mention judging. The *Perth Prize for Contemporary Art* was judged by panels of judges, which in 1954 consisted of the Director, a representative of the Art Gallery Society and a representative of the sponsors. The judges of its *Prize for Drawing* were experts such as curator and art historian, Dr Ursula Hoff, art historian Bernard Smith, and Sydney gallery director Robert Haines. The judges for its *International Drawing Prize* included British artists William Scott, Anthony Caro and Sir John Rothenstein.[58]

The Trustees of the Queensland Art Gallery have administered several prizes. The *Godfrey Rivers Bequest Prize*, presented by the Half Dozen Group of Artists, was judged by the Gallery's Art Advisory Committee intermittently between the 1930s and the 1960s. For the *H. C. Richards Prize*, later the *Trustees' Purchase Prize*, and the *L. J. Harvey Memorial Prize for Drawing*, the Gallery used judges such as Russell Drysdale, Peter Laverty, Director of the AGNSW, Gordon Thomson, Deputy Director of the NGV, and Daniel Thomas, then curator at the AGNSW. The *Pedersen Prize for Drawing and Printmaking* was judged on at least one occasion by art writer Mervyn Horton.

The judging of the *John McCaughey Memorial Art Prize*, which is administered by the NGV Gallery Society on behalf of the benefactor, McCaughey's daughter, has consistently caused controversy. Ms McCaughey had specified that it should be awarded to art depicting Australian life, alternating annually between a landscape and genre painting. It was first judged by the Director of the NGV, the Professor of Fine Arts at Melbourne University and one other expert, and its award to social realist painter Noel Counihan drew strong criticism. Its subsequent history represents alternating, but unsuccessful, efforts to achieve harmony by changing the approach to judging and changing the interpretation of the specified theme. The final eruption came in 1961, when the judge, artist John Brack, gave the award to an abstract painting which, according to legal advice supplied to the Trustees, did not comply with the terms of the Trust. After Miss McCaughey's death the conditions were redrafted on two more occasions, and the prize money was increased before the standard of entries became acceptable

to the judges.[59] There are now usually three judges, including a curator, an artist and a representative of the McCaughey Trustees, and the concept of "Australian way of life" is interpreted liberally. Most of the difficulties seem to have originated with the sponsor's concept of an appropriate subject, and the challenge which interpretation of it presented to the judges.

Most of the competitions in this category which have so far been discussed have been held in the first and second phases of competitions - that is, up to the end of the 1970s. Some gallery based competitions which were held during the third phase have, however, developed new approaches to judging. One of these is the *Dobell Prize for Drawing*, which was first exhibited in 1993, and in the administration of which the Gallery works jointly with the Dobell Foundation.[60] Judges, who are artists, are chosen by the Foundation.

There is a new approach to judging in the innovative prizes based in the NGV which began in the 1990s - in them, the system of judging both reflects and influences the nature of the award. In the first *Clemenger Prize*, for example, several works were shown by each of twenty artists chosen by James Mollison, Director of the NGV, to represent different aspects of art. From these the judges, Daniel Thomas, Doug Hall, Director of the QAG, and Joan Clemenger, one of the sponsors, chose one winner. There was a different arrangement for the 1996 prize. In the first stage, two curators chose ten mid-career artists to take part, and the final stage judges were Museum Director Leon Paroissien, artist Mike Parr and Joan Clemenger. [61] The competition was thus restricted in scope, but handled with expertise at both stages, and it presented a significant overview of one aspect of art.

The *Rigg Award* was also designed as a two-stage competition. In the first award in 1994, which was for ceramics, a panel of eight expert selectors chose some twenty-six Victorian potters who were invited to participate, and one judge from New Zealand chose the winner. The result was described by curator Peter Timms as having potential to create a new sense of prestige for the crafts.[62] The 1997 *Award* focussed on metalwork. Twenty finalists were chosen by Jeff Taylor, Executive Officer of Craft Victoria and Terence Lane, Senior Curator of Australian Art at the NGV, and the judge was Judith O'Callaghan, Senior curator at the Powerhouse Museum. This sequence of

curatorship and adjudication had the effect of encouraging the production of work which might not otherwise have been created, and bringing expert judgement to bear on it.

Contempora5 was intended as a major public relations exercise in the arts on the part of the government, and one of its main intentions seems to have been to attract publicity by making it controversial. It also was a two stage contest. The five finalists were chosen from 460 entrants by a panel of five, consisting of Bruce James, SMH, Christopher Chapman, AGSA, Victoria Lynn, AGNSW, Timothy Potts, Director of the NGV, and British art critic Andrew Graham-Dixon. The panel appears to have been carefully balanced, except that it lacked artists, because the artist member, who was to have been appointed by the Premier, did not materialise. The reason for Graham-Dixon's inclusion is not clear, except that he had the qualification of having been a judge for the controversial *Turner Prize* in Britain.[63] As it happens, the *Contempora5* two-stage procedure resulting in five finalists is similar to that of the *Turner Prize*, which has been offered since the late eighties. The fact that all *Contempora5* finalists proposed to create installations suggests that a certain direction was given to the judging, but it perhaps had the effect of making the final choice of the winner more realistic.[64] The five finalists in the second *Contempora5* in 1999, were chosen from nearly 400 entries by a judging panel of five which also chose the winner. The panel consisted of Naomi Cass, Cultural Development Officer at the University of Melbourne, Edward Colless, Senior Lecturer at the School of Art, University of Tasmania, Jason Smith, Curator of Contemporary Art at the NGV, Zara Stanhope of Monash University Gallery, and John McDonald, Head of Australian Art, NGA.[65]

Another gallery-based competition which is reminiscent of the *Turner Prize* in structure is the *Seppelts Contemporary Art Award*, held at the MCA in Sydney. In the 1997 competition a five-person jury, chaired by Leon Paroissien, Director of the Museum, chose five finalists whose work was exhibited for a month before the winner was chosen.[66] The jury included curators from the AGWA and the Museum of Modern Art at Heide, the director of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery and the art critic from the Melbourne *Age*. In a democratic exercise, finalists were chosen from nominations made by a variety of institutions. The judges were looking for artists who were pushing back the boundaries of

contemporary practice.[67] All received an equal share of the prize money, and one was named winner at the end of the exhibition. In 1998 there was greater complexity, with twenty-five nominators, and three specialised categories. There were five general jurors and two additional specialist jurors for each of the three categories. Nine finalists were chosen, and from these one winner was chosen in each category. This produced a varied exhibition and reasonably specialised judging.

The judging is always a critical element of a competition, but it has been particularly so in the case of the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, where many of the entries are more concerned with the traditional ideas which they express rather than the aesthetics of European art. It is essential that judges are in sympathy with the intentions of the artists and their techniques, so that they can base their decisions on informed comparisons, and, most importantly, so that the reasoning behind their decisions will be reasonably intelligible to the artists. The MAGNT seems to have achieved this with some success. Judges are chosen by the Curator of Aboriginal Art at the MAGNT in consultation with the Director, and the aim is to have predominantly indigenous judges, complemented by another judge with different expertise - perhaps a curator with good understanding of Aboriginal art. Aesthetics are essentially the basis for judging, but other aspects are also considered.[68] Judges for the first Award in 1984 were Aboriginal artist Wandjuk Marika (a printmaker who follows the pictorial traditions of her clan) and Peter McKenzie.[69] In later years they have included Fiona Foley, an Aboriginal curator and artist, and Gary Lee, an aboriginal artist and critic from Larakia, Ron Hurley, an artist who was Chair of the Visual Arts Committee of the Australia Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Board, Djon Mundine, a curator who was formerly adviser to the Ramingining community, the eminent anthropologist Howard Morphy, and Doreen Mellor, an Aboriginal Australian with extensive curatorial experience.[70]

Observations

Judging in major gallery based competitions tends to have some special characteristics. One is that the results are likely to be of interest to a diverse group of viewers. Another is that these competitions are often long lasting, and so are capable of establishing principles based on

experience. A third is that curatorial expertise should be available to provide assistance, if not necessarily advice.

In judging the *Wynne* and *Archibald Prizes* the Trustees are not able to draw on curatorial expertise, and it is interesting that, in more than seventy years of judging, they do not seem to have developed general principles. Judging the *Archibald Prize* in particular has certainly exercised their minds, probably because of its high public profile and the comment which is certain to come from viewers and critics. They do not, however seem to have been concerned with the significance of likeness, or of perception of personality, in relation to judging portraits of people most of whom they have never seen. In particular, in selecting the "best portrait", they do not seem to have addressed the criterion mentioned by Brilliant in his discussion of intentions in making portraits - "best for what?"[71] In fact, it is probably the case that they have now developed a convention of making judgements on the basis of a blend of personal taste and response to current artistic trends, and with some attention to providing variety from year to year. There is no attempt to favour particular categories of artists, such as those who are at a particular stage in their career.

The original benefactors, Wynne and Archibald, had no real alternative to commissioning the Trustees to act as judges, and had no way of knowing that over time they would come to be less highly regarded as art experts. Similarly, they would not have envisaged that attitudes to the portrait and landscape would change. Consequently, their bequests have survived largely as popular events, rather than being professionally significant. It is tempting, however, to imagine that Archibald would have enjoyed the publicity generated annually by the judging.

The NGV and the MCA have been able to take a more curatorial approach to the more recent competitions which they have hosted. This means that the first stage of judging is done by experts and that relatively few competitors face the challenge of continuing to the final stage. In the case of the *Rigg* and *Clemenger Prizes* the result is that a fair selection of artists reaches the final stage, so that their work is exhibited, to the benefit of the public as well as of the artists. The *Contempora5 Prize* presents a limited exhibition which does not offer viewers a broad idea of the types of work which were originally proposed, or an opportunity to assess the reasoning behind the judging.

In effect, it robs a number of artists of an opportunity to have their work seen, and gives the judge or curator precedence over the artist.

Competitions sponsored by other public art galleries and local government authorities

The AGNSW has been a pioneer among public art galleries in its involvement with art competitions, largely because it has been drawn into competitions indirectly through bequests. In almost all of these cases the Gallery does not benefit from its participation in a tangible way - for example, through acquisitions of works of art. Without question, however, it benefits in other ways such as the publicity and public interest which are created by competitions and the popularity of the exhibitions which they generate, all of which are useful financially. As I noted above, the prizes based in the AGNSW contribute a significant part of its budget. Moreover, it benefits by being widely recognised as an important centre of art expertise.

From the 1920 s onwards, a number of other public galleries have actually initiated and staged art competitions, or have collaborated in staging them. In the same way, some municipal authorities which did not have an art gallery ran art competitions, probably because this demonstrated their concern with cultural matters, and because it was a fashionable thing to do. They might also have had a vision of establishing a local art gallery in the future. As publicly funded institutions, they had to show some positive return for their efforts, and quite often this took the form of the acquisition of prize-winning works as well as the staging of exhibitions. There was usually a distinct difference in attitude between the staff of galleries and municipal councillors. The former had some expertise and interest in art, whereas the latter were often business men who knew little about art, although they usually knew what they liked, and saw art as a form of investment. These differences in attitude were to have an indirect effect on the judging of some competitions. Clearly, from both the artistic and commercial viewpoints it was essential to attract professional artists to enter the competitions, and they were unlikely to be attracted unless there were reasonable standards of judging. For this reason, special judges, rather than members of the organisation's own staff, were almost always employed. I will discuss some of the more significant competitions in this category.

The first of the *George Crouch Prizes* in the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery was given in 1927. Judges for this prize, and subsequently also the *Minnie Crouch Prize*, were chosen by the Gallery Association Council. The first was the artist Septimus Power, who had received some major public commissions, and who was followed by a distinguished sequence which included artists W. B. McInnes, George Bell, Louis McCubbin, Roland Wakelin, William Dobell, John Rowell, Fred Williams and James Gleeson. Others were art historians and administrators including Sir Joseph Burke, Dr Ursula Hoff, Bernard Smith, Daryl Lindsay, Eric Westbrook, Hal Missingham, Daniel Thomas and James Mollison. These judges provided the Gallery with a valuable set of acquisitions, and they helped to establish the professional image of the competitors.

The galleries in the Victorian towns of Geelong and Bendigo were pioneers in using art competitions as a way of adding to their collections. The Geelong Art Gallery Association, which was based in the Art Gallery, decided to hold a *Centenary Art Exhibition* in 1938, and invited Sir John Longstaff to judge it.[72] Longstaff had a long and successful career as an artist and had won a number of prizes, and he was no doubt selected to bring prestige to the Geelong competition. The 1938 Exhibition was a public success, and the Association continued to hold competitive exhibitions annually except for a short break during the war. The judges chosen were usually prominent artists - Napier Waller, Longstaff again, and others such as Charles Wheeler and Frederick McCubbin. There was no controversy about their decisions, except when Wheeler declined to award the prize for two successive years because of the poor quality of the entries.[73] The Gallery acquired works by a number of emerging artists such as Shore, Dargie, Thake, Herman and Bush. In 1961, however, the judging was upgraded to a panel of three, consisting of two practising artists and a representative of the Gallery itself. Judges in the first year were William Frater, Len Annois and F. E. Richardson, the Chairman of the Trustees.[74] This change was probably designed to ensure that the needs of the Gallery's collection were kept in mind. After 1965 the original prize was replaced successively by prizes sponsored by commercial firms - the *Corio Five Star Whisky Prize*, the *Capital Permanent Prize* and the *Geelong Contemporary Art Prize*. All of these were more professionally oriented, using directors and curators of galleries from States other than Victoria as judges rather than artists.

There seems to have been no thought of drawing on the expertise of the NGV. In 1962, the Gallery became the first in Australia to offer a prize for printmaking, and it began the acquisitive *Geelong Print Prize* in 1965, again with the objective of adding to the Gallery's print collection, and using the leading printmaker Grahame King, as the first adjudicator. Following the appointment of the first professional Director of the Gallery, the prize was abandoned in 1974 and replaced with purchase awards, made on the Director's recommendation[75] - a comment on the value of prizes as a means of acquisition.

The prizes given at the Bendigo Art Gallery were intended to offer encouragement to young painters and sculptors. The first, in 1938, was judged by A. T. Woodward, an art teacher at the local School of Mines.[76] In 1939 J. S. McDonald, Director of the NGV, acted as judge, but later judges were usually artists. Several, such as Dargie, Rowell, and Bush had themselves won the prize. Others were well known painters such as Douglas Dundas and Arnold Shore, and in 1956 Eric Westbrook, the newly arrived Director of the NGV, officiated.[77] The prize had yielded some useful acquisitions before it ended in 1967, to be replaced by an invitation purchase exhibition - another comment on the perceived usefulness of prize acquisitions in developing a balanced collection.

There was a similar situation with the *Albury Art Prize*, which was the first of the many art competitions which were to be staged by local government authorities in NSW in the 1950's and 1960's. The organisers had conferred with the organisers of the *Mosman Prize*, which was being planned at the same time. In both cases there was always only one judge. The judge of the first competition in 1947 was Daryl Lindsay, Director of the NGV, and therefore an authoritative figure. The second, representing the other side of the equation, was James Quinn, President of the VAS. He was followed by the veteran artist Max Meldrum, a great proponent of the tonal theory of painting. For the next fifteen years the judges were painters, at least five of whom had been winners of the *Albury Prize*, while some, such as Ernest Buckmaster, William Dargie, John Eldershaw and Murray Griffin, had won other prizes. They also included Betty Paterson, a child portraitist. Generally they represented the art establishment, and the principle that, if artists were to be judges, they had to be artists who had made good.

After 1964 there was a change. Judging became much more professionally oriented with the appointment of experts such as Dr Ursula Hoff, Deputy Director of the NGV, Brian Finemore, a curator at the NGV, Robert Campbell, Director of the AGSA, David Thomas, Director of the Newcastle Art Gallery, and Peter Timms, Director of the Shepparton Art Gallery. Representatives of the Victorian Artists Society, including its President, Edward Heffernan and Max Sherlock, an Artist of the Year, also acted as judges.[78] There was another change after 1967. Like Bendigo, Albury ended the first past the post type of competition, and instead invited selected artists to submit works to be considered for purchase. This did not do away with competition. Rather, it meant that there had been a competitive phase before the artists themselves were actually involved, and that the role of the judges was to select works which would be an appropriate acquisition for the Gallery. This second change was probably the reason for greater emphasis on curatorial judges, who now had a more complex, although limited, role as collection builders. In this phase the Gallery's collection benefited by the acquisition of works by artists such as Fred Williams, Elwyn Lynn, and Maximillian Feurring, who were becoming known. For a few years in the 1970's the prize again became open, but it later reverted to being a selection for purchase, complemented by an open prize for local artists.

The *Mosman Art Prize*, which was begun and operated by the Municipality. It was also acquisitive, but the Council did not operate a gallery, and the works acquired were hung in the Council chambers. Alan Gamble, a Councillor who was also an architect and amateur artist, developed the idea of the prize and seems to have been largely responsible for running it. Judges were chosen by a committee, and most of them were proposed by Gamble, who opposed the idea of a judging panel on the grounds that it always led to compromise. Although there were some differences of opinion within the Council about the decisions of judges, Gamble himself felt that Council members were generally philosophical about the judging, and in fact looked forward to a debate on the outcome.[79] This optimistic view was not always reflected in the Press, and in 1991 one Councillor, on seeing two entries chosen as winners by William Wright, Assistant Director at the AGNSW, asked to be assured that it was in fact a joke.[80] Judges were often well known artists such as Lloyd Rees, Margaret Preston,

Erik Langker, James Gleeson, John Santry and John Olsen, but critics, gallery owners, art historians and critics such as Donald Brook and Nancy Borlase also had a turn. The general standard of judging has been high, and judges usually provide comments on the entries to the Council. The system of adjudication based on competition rather than assessment for inclusion in the collection has built a collection which is historically interesting although not necessarily representative.

The Municipality of Rockdale has never had a Gallery, but it ran an art competition for over twenty years. Unlike Mosman it was not an acquisitive competition after the first few years, and it was presumably maintained by the Council as a cultural service to the community. The first competition was held in 1955 and judged by Douglas Dundas, a prominent member of the NSW Society of Artists, who became a popular adjudicator. The two judges in 1965 were Harold Abbott and Wallace Thornton, both from the National Art School, and in 1974, Kevin Hambly and Ken Reinhard, the latter a painter who was to become Dean of Art at Alexander Mackie College. They judged respectively the Traditional and Contemporary sections, the distinction between which was unpopular with both artists and adjudicators. They appear to have made good choices, because the winners included several artists such as Tom Gleghorn, John Santry, John Olsen, Eva Kubbos and Peter Laverty who were on the way to becoming well known. The Municipality of Hunter's Hill ran a similar non-acquisitive competition in which artist judges rewarded artists such as Grace Cossington Smith, Hal Missingham, Guy Warren and Eva Kubbos.

An early prize in country NSW was the *Muswellbrook Art Prize*, begun in 1958 by the Municipality. It was an acquisitive prize intended to form the nucleus of a collection, and a small gallery was in fact opened in 1993. To select works for acquisition, the Town Council employed a different judge each year, including some popular adjudicators such as Laurie Thomas, Guy Warren, himself a prize winner, and Director of the University of Sydney Art Workshop, and Brian Finemore, Curator of Australian Art at the NGV. In 1976 the award was changed to a recommendation for purchase from among the entries. The Grafton *Jacaranda Prize* seems to have used a similar group of judges until 1988 when it became a drawing prize, and began to draw on specialised judges from the QAG, such as Doug Hall, the Director, and Andrew Sayers, Assistant Curator of Prints. It also employed Dr Idris Murphy,

an artist and lecturer, and Simeon Kronenberg, the National Director of Museums Australia.

One of the difficulties of judging art competitions for local government authorities was applying the expertise of the judges while at the same time satisfying sponsors in the guise of the Councillors. This hazard is illustrated by John Santry's account of an episode at the presentation of prizes for the *Wagga Wagga Art Prize*, probably in the 1950s. The Mayor flatly refused to hand over the Council's prize of $100 to the artist chosen as the winner by the judge, Lloyd Rees, who even then was a respected artist. The situation was only resolved when the local art society rallied around to raise the money, so that the winner eventually received his $100.[81]

The country centre of Bathurst also began running art competitions in the 1950s. From 1955 to 1971 all but three were acquisitive, and they were judged by artists such as Lloyd Rees, Douglas Dundas, Sali Herman and Russell Drysdale, and art professionals including Bernard Smith, Hal Missingham, Donald Brook and Kym Bonython. From 1972 to 1993, judges were asked to advise on purchases rather than awarding prizes.

There has always been a controversial relationship between the sponsors and judges in relation to the Gold Coast Art Prize. In 1968, Eric Westbrook, Director of the NGV, was the judge for the first prize, which was to be acquisitive, and which was won by Michael John Taylor's *Overnight sleeper*. The painting was acquired, but reputedly the Mayor refused to hang the work in his office as had been planned. Westbrook avoided the prospect of similar difficulties in the future by negotiating a change from a simple competition to purchases for a future gallery, made on the judge's advice. Although there was no acquisition policy, subsequent judges have continued to purchase useful additions in the face of internal controversy and external criticism, and it is interesting to see their choices acknowledged in *Key Works*, the catalogue for the exhibition celebrating the twenty-first year of the *Art Prize*.[82] The Council occasionally exerted its authority. For example, it withdrew its support temporarily in 1973, and in 1981 insisted on a Gold Coast theme for entries. Decisions were sometimes made by panels of judges, such as Hal Missingham, David Thomas and Alan McCulloch in 1970 and William Dargie, John Bailey and Alan

Warren in 1971, but later they were usually made by individuals including art dealer Joseph Brown, and artists Lawrence Daws, Jan Senbergs and Jeffrey Makin.

Both the collection and the running of the prize were transferred to the Gold Coast City Art Gallery when it was established in 1986. In an interview in 1987, the Director of the Gallery reported that the Council had changed the Gallery's acquisition policy to give itself the final say in selections. She said that the new policy had been designed to exclude narrow aesthetic judgements which could result in the kind of modern versus conservative controversy which had marked the judging of previous prizes, and she was concerned that the change would make it very difficult to acquire modern art.[83] Conrad Jupiter's Casino took over the sponsorship of the prize in 1990. The Gallery Director now selects the judges, and a committee makes a pre-selection from slides.[84]

In the Northern Territory, the *Alice Prize* began in about 1970, under the control of the Alice Springs Art Foundation. Soon afterwards it became acquisitive, and still later its acquisitions were placed in the Araluen Arts Centre, which is the central exhibition gallery for the town. In building up this collection it has consistently relied on panels of one or two judges who are gallery directors such as James Mollison, Daniel Thomas, Kenneth Hood, Doug Hall and Leon Paroissien, or teachers and critics such as Patrick McCaughey and Elwyn Lynn.

By the 1960s the art competitions staged by public galleries and Councils were becoming more specialised, especially when they were acquisitive. For example, the Fremantle Arts Centre ran an invitation prize for drawing for a few years from 1983. It usually had Western Australian artists and curators as judges, and in 1984 had a panel of three which included Hal Missingham and painter John Beard, both of whom had links with Western Australia. The Arts Centre's particular specialisation, however, was the *Print Prize* which was first offered in 1976 and continues to be a lively contest. Ian Templeman, the Director of the Arts Centre, chose the judges, who were usually local people because of the expense of bringing other to Western Australia. He was always the Chairman of the panel, which usually consisted of three people. The aim was to include one expert and one other person from the local community, so that there was a mixture of curators, artists,

and teachers. The judging process usually consisted of reaching agreement on discarding the works to be rejected, after which each member of the panel selected a few potential winners to form a group from which the final selection was made. Assessment was based on factors such as the power of the image, originality and technical skill, but the final choice was made in the context of the needs of the collection. His view was that the competition was not so much a race to be won as a situation where one work had to be singled out.[85] After about 1990 a greater effort was made to introduce new influences by including printmakers or critics from the Eastern states.

Mildura and Shepparton both have galleries where the collection has become specialised through use of competitions, so that they each have a particular role in the Regional Galleries system. Mildura's competition specialised in sculpture, and because of the logistic difficulties associated with sculpture, a two stage judging system was used. There was a pre-selection of entries in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide, and the successful entries were sent to Mildura to be judged by a panel consisting of Eric Westbrook, Director of the NGV, and nominees of the NSW Society of Sculptors and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects as well as the Director, Ernst van Hattum. There was general enthusiasm for this award and also for the second in 1964, when the judges were Hal Missingam, Director of the AGNSW, art critic Bill Hannan and van Hattum. For the third award in 1967 the judges were sculptor and critic, Donald Brook, Laurie Thomas, Director of the QAG, and Tom McCullough, the new Director of the Arts Centre. The standard of this competition was lower, entries included more experimental work, and some Councillors resisted the recommendation that the Council should buy certain pieces.[86] The fourth *Triennial* in 1970 was no longer a competition. Participation was by invitation from the Director, and the benefit for participating artists was that their work was exhibited, and that the Centre purchased some works for the collection from its small budget. Emphasis was on experimental, and particularly ephemeral works, and in fact some awards were given to the creators of ephemera as a kind of compensation for the eventual disintegration of the works. Judging was no longer relevant. These developments continued in the 1973, 1975 and 1978 *Triennials*, but there was open hostility between the Director and the Council in 1978, and, in spite of changes in the directorship, there continued to be difficulties until the last *Mildura Triennial* was held in 1988.

The Shepparton Arts Centre began collecting ceramics in the early 1970's, staging competitions as a way of developing the collection, and using expert judges such as Dick Richards, Curator of Applied Arts of the Art Gallery of South Australia. This phase of competition faded out in 1975. When it was revived in 1971 with a grant from the Sidney Myer Fund, it was more highly specialised, and it later became an international event, using experts such as ceramic artist Stephen Benwell to judge with Joe Pascoe, the Director of the Gallery.[87] Pascoe's own expertise was confirmed when he was invited to arrange a special collection of Australian ceramics for exhibition at the international museum of ceramics in Faenza, Italy.

Beginning in 1973, the Mornington Peninsula Arts Centre offered prizes for drawing and prints in alternative years, the works selected being acquired for the collection "on advice". For each there were judging panels of three or four. Until 1991 these always included Alan McCulloch as Director of the Centre. The artists on the panel were often painters, and in several cases previous winners of the prizes. Others were curators, critics and patrons, with a stronger representation of printmakers for the print award.[88]

The annual *City of Hobart Art Prize* confronts judges with a different kind of challenge. The prize was originally for painting, but since 1995 it has developed into an annual competition for works in two different media which change every year. There is variety but not continuity. A small committee, including the City Council's Cultural Development Officer, chooses judges who are specialists in the media being featured. These judges make a pre-selection from slides of the work of all artists who have expressed interest in entering the competition, and on this basis about forty artists are invited to take part. They then submit the works specially created for the competition.[89] In 1996 the media covered were Photo-media and Glass, and the judges were Kate Davidson, Curator of International Photography, NGA, Geoffrey Edwards, Curator of Glass and Sculpture, NGV, and Ian McLean, Tasmanian School of Art. In 1997, when the media were Jewellery and the Print, judges were Sasha Grishin, Reader in Art History at the ANU, Bea Maddock, printmaker and painter, and a representative from the Centre for Contemporary Craft, Sydney.

Although the enthusiasm for art competitions run by local government authorities reached its peak in the 1960s and 1970s, some municipal authorities have only recently begun holding acquisitive art competitions. The Council of Clarence City, near Hobart, began an acquisitive prize in 1988, and was able to use judges such as Hendrick Kolenberg, an experienced teacher, curator and judge, with Lorraine Jenyns, a ceramic sculptor, for the first year, and Paul Westbury and other staff from the QVMAG in the following year.[90] Also in Tasmania, the Central Highlands Council began an acquisitive prize for works of art in several formats in 1995, with Patricia Sabine, Director of the TMAG, as judge in the first year and later Max Angus, a well known Tasmanian painter.[91] The Pine Rivers Shire Council, at Strathpine near Brisbane, began a multimedia competition in 1993. In the first year of the competition they used Shire officers as judges. By 1996, more professional judges were chosen - a curator and a commercial gallery owner.[92]

Observations

All sponsors in this category were in the position of being able to choose their judges, who provided expertise, particularly in the case of local government sponsorships, where the sponsors themselves usually did not have access to expertise. It was therefore important to choose judges who would be seen to possess good qualifications, usually in terms of artistic or curatorial experience. The relationship between sponsors and judges could, however, be a delicate one in which sponsors might disagree with judges' decisions - it is unlikely that Wagga and the Gold Coast were alone in having this difficulty.

The device of changing a competition to "purchase on advice", while avoiding some confrontations, and providing more scope for rational collection building, could be disadvantageous to artists whose success was now likely to be conditioned by the nature of the existing collection and the funds available for purchase, rather than their own performance. On the other hand, it offered the possibility of exposure of their work in a permanent collection.

Increasing specialisation was beneficial for both artists and collections. For artists, it allowed greater possibility of choice, and was an improvement on the free for all situation of many competitions. For collections it helped to give effect to a pre-determined policy.

Competitions sponsored by individuals

Individuals who both sponsor art competitions and make themselves responsible for the judging usually have some specific intention for holding the competition. They are distinct from those who depute the responsibility to a gallery or other art institution during their lifetime. Several competitions of this type have been discussed in relation to the galleries in which they are based, and it has to be noted that some of them have been able to make their ideas known to the judges. For example, although the awards endowed by Lilian Pedersen are administered by the QAG, she was able to specify that they should reflect her special interest in drawing, printmaking and small sculpture, and Joan Clemenger has been involved with the judging of the *Clemenger Prize* at the NGV.

Claude Hotchin, who has been discussed in Chapter 2, was the embodiment of sponsorship by an individual. He himself judged the series of acquisitive prizes which he funded annually in Perth from 1948 to 1972. He did so solely on the basis of his own taste, but presumably with the intention of choosing paintings suitable for distribution to institutions in Western Australia.

The personal goal of Jack Manton, a dedicated collector based in Queensland, was to pay homage to artists he particularly respected. He selected the fourteen artists to be included by inviting established painters including Arthur Boyd, Albert Tucker, Sidney Nolan and Brett Whiteley to take part in a competition with a generous prize. For the delicate task of adjudicating among this distinguished group, he chose Daniel Thomas, a highly experienced curator whose judgements would have been respected and who awarded the prize to the veteran Lloyd Rees. This was perhaps not an adventurous choice, but it was a diplomatic one, and was no doubt acceptable to the sponsor.

Through his competition Manton was indulging his connoisseurship rather than supporting a cause. This was not the case with Doug Moran, also a business magnate, whose national portrait prize was first awarded in 1988. His stated intention is to arrest what he sees as a decline in portraiture, apparent particularly in the quality of entries in

the *Archibald Prize*.[93] This prize has strongly commercial overtones. It is sponsored by the Morgan Health Care Group, whose administrative facilities presumably service it, as well as the Tweed Shire Council. Likeness is clearly an important aspect, since competitors are required to submit photographs of their subjects. There are large numbers of entries (almost 2,000 in 1990), and judging is carried out in two stages by two groups of judges, who operate under the influence of Moran's criteria. On the first occasion, four Australian painters, including the veteran multiple *Archibald Prize* winner William Dargie, made the first selection of thirty finalists, from whom the winner was chosen by three judges imported from overseas - the Director of the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, a royal portrait painter from Britain, and a People's Artist from Russia.[94] A similar arrangement, but with varying numbers of judges, has continued in later years. In 1996 James Mollison, Director of the NGV and Archibald winner Judy Cassab made the initial selection, from which Dr Charles Saumarez Smith, Director of the National Portrait Gallery in London chose the winner.

In 1998, Alan Dodge, Director of the AGWA, and Daniel Thomas, now retired from his role as gallery director, were responsible for the first selection from the 635 entries. Their instructions were that the works had to be likenesses, tested on the evidence of a photograph which accompanied each portrait, and that only one portrait by each artist could be considered. They obviously worked together harmoniously, and their comments, which are published in the Catalogue, are illuminating. They began by setting aside about one tenth of the entries, solely on the grounds of artistic merit. At this stage they did not exclude multiple entries from either unfamiliar or familiar artists, because they were conscious of the prospect of orchestrating diverse works of similar merit into an exhibition destined for diverse gallery spaces. From the start, paintings were placed in sections which defined themselves as, for example, Max Meldrum tonalism, Photo-realism, Art-history knowingness, Pop Art, Expressionism, Surrealism and Kitsch. Vulgarity, as distinct from Kitsch, was banished, and technical excellence gave way to defects in characterisation. Their principle was that portraiture is more rewarding when it exposes individuality than when it colludes with a subject's public face, a maxim which the Trustees of the AGNSW could have applied with advantage, especially in the early days of the *Archibald Prize*. Among their other confessions were the fact that they both went for over-the-top theatricality, and, in

self-portraits, for extreme narcissism. Their conclusion was that the standard was so high that excellent portraits had to go if they were too similar in style to others. The final judge in 1998, as usual from overseas, was Professor Alistair Rowan, a specialist in architectural history and Principal of the Edinburgh College of Art at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh.[95] The winning portrait was an expressive portrait of marathon runner Steve Moneghetti.

Critics see the exhibition as conventional, and as having failed to attract the best in contemporary portraiture. The *Moran* winners have consistently been very different from the assorted *Archibald* winners, although some artists have entered the same portrait in both. It seems, however, that the judges have chosen as winners the kind of portraits which Moran wanted. Whether his competition strategy will achieve the long term results which he envisages is a different question.

The *Anne and Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship* is a major bequest based in South Australia. Samstag was a unique benefactor, having been a lecturer in Fine Art and President of the CAS in South Australia. He knew the kind of artists he wanted to help, and the type of support which he wished to provide, and he was familiar with the current art scene. The Program was to be administered by the South Australian School of Art. He specified the composition of the selection panel, which was to be chaired by the Head of the School of Art and was to include a senior academic staff member of the School, as well as an artist of standing who was independent of the School.[96] These provisions allowed some future flexibility, and reflected his acceptance of the fact that he had to trust this small group to determine the direction of the Scholarships.

Observations

These cases illustrate different approaches to judging more clearly than group sponsorships. Hotchin judged unequivocally in accordance with his own tastes. Manton used a respected judge essentially to confirm his own taste. Moran's complex system was perhaps necessary to deal with the large numbers of entrants. The Australian judges who performed the first stage have demonstrated how intelligence and experience could be applied positively to this huge task. The choice of overseas judges to make the final choice perhaps represented a curious attempt to add prestige to the process, and also gave him more scope

for choosing judges with impressive credentials, and whose philosophy was in harmony with his own. Samstag's aim seems to have been to set up a flexible system capable of meeting changing situations. Admittedly, the awards were concerned with scholarships rather than prizes, but they were competitively based. Hotchin and Moran were, to different degrees, attempting to influence artists to conform with their own ideas, and to gain some kudos by doing so. Manton was in effect acting as a patron of some established artists, and again gaining some kudos. Samstag, on the contrary, was intent on developing arrangements for providing young artists with opportunities for professional development which continue to be appropriate in changing circumstances.

Competitions sponsored for commercial purposes

All art competitions are intended to provide some sort of benefit, tangible or intangible, altruistic or otherwise, for their sponsors. This is especially true of competitions staged by commercial undertakings, which have an obligation to return a profit. Competitions in this category tend to fall into two types - those which bring relatively direct benefits because they are related to the business of their patron, and those which offer indirect benefits such as publicity. Judges in commercially sponsored competitions have an important role in establishing the status of the competition by virtue of their own status, and also in making judgements which appear credible and just to viewers and others who are likely to assess the sponsor in terms of the competition. In Australia, commercially sponsored competitions began as early as the 1920s, and gathered momentum during the 1960s and 1970s.

A pioneering use of an art competition for commercial purposes was the *State Theatre Art Quest* which was held in Sydney in 1929 as part of the celebrations for the opening of the theatre. The Trustees of the AGNSW fulfilled their role as expert representatives of the Sydney art establishment by supplying as judges three of their number. These were Sydney Ure Smith, Lister Lister, and Charles Lloyd Jones who were complemented by Stuart Doyle, Managing Director of the theatre.[97]

Another pioneering venture was the series of art competitions held by the Dunlop Rubber Company, Australia, in the 1950s, which the firm described as part of company policy to make a contribution to

community activities. The judges were carefully chosen to establish the status of the competition. In the first year there was an impressive group consisting of the Directors of the National Galleries in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, together with Sir Joseph Burke and Laurie Thomas, Deputy Director of the NGV.[98] In the four later years of the competition there were smaller panels, but members always included well known artists including Will Ashton, John Rowell, Arnold Shore, William Dargie and Charles Booth.

The extremely popular commercially inspired competition staged by the *Australian Women's Weekly* in Sydney attracted some 500 entries in its first year in 1955.[99] The judging panels were drawn each year from the highest available professional level - they consisted of the Directors of all the State National Galleries.[100] This panel selected fifteen paintings as a short list from which they chose the winners, and they also selected a representative group of fifty paintings to be toured to all the state capitals. In assessing the nature of their decisions the *Herald* critic was probably correct in saying that they could not vote for an academic work (which would presumably have seemed too reactionary), nor would they vote for a really "modern" work (which might have been unpopular), so that the successful competitors were those who compromised by entering academic portraits with touches of modernity.[101]

Although the *COMALCO Invitation Award* was not directly connected with the firm's production, the nature of the award was closely associated with its product, and its objectives and its functioning were worked out in consultation with architects and sculptors. The judges had a double function - firstly to choose the six sculptors who were invited to submit maquettes, and secondly to choose the winner on the basis of the maquettes. In the first year (when the project was an architectural screen), the judges were Eric Westbrook, Director of the NGV, J. A. Tuckson, deputy Director of the AGNSW, and R. M. Simpson, a partner in Yuncken Freeman Architects Pty Ltd. In 1971 (when the requirement was for a free standing sculpture), the judges were J. Baily, Director of the AGSA, R.I. Macdonald, a partner in the firm of Eggleston, Macdonald and Secomb, and Elwyn Lynn, Director of the Power Gallery of Contemporary Art.[102] Clearly, it was to the benefit of both the sponsors and the competitors that there should be

expert adjudication which would impress potential clients, and in fact some commissions did result from the Award.

The saga of the Melbourne City Council and the design of the sculpture *Vault* for its City Square in the early 1980s is discussed in Appendix 4. It reflects a different aspect of judging a design for a specific practical purpose. It was selected by a committee of experts, including the design architects for the square, and approved by the Lord Mayor and a majority of Councillors, and it was only after it had been erected that serious criticism from the Press and some councillors developed to the point where its was removed illegally and provocatively. Whatever the legalities of the situation, and without knowing the nature of the other entries in the competition, it is difficult to avoid a suspicion that the fundamental difficulty was an elitist attitude on the part of the judges, and unwillingness to accept that a sculpture in that situation should please a majority of the community, in conflict with the reactionary stance of a majority of the Councillors.

Agricultural societies seem to have used judges who were popular in other competitions, and who presumably applied similar standards. In 1957 the Arts and Craft Committee of the RAS in Sydney agreed to ask the Directors of the NGV and the AGSA, and the Royal Society of Artists for names of judges.[103] They subsequently employed artists such as Douglas Dundas, William Dobell and Elwyn Lynn, and arts administrators and curators including Laurie Thomas, J. A. Tuckson, Andrew Sayers and Hendrick Kolenberg.

In general, the commercially sponsored prizes mentioned above have had some association with the sponsor's business. Beginning in the 1960s, the competitions in which there was no direct connection between the competition and the business required the appointment of independent judges. The largest and most significant of these was the *Transfield Prize*, which was first offered in Sydney in 1961 by the construction firm of Transfield Ltd.[104] It reflected the personal enthusiasm of the firm's founder and Chairman, Franco Belgiorno-Nettis, and his determination to support and give some prominence to artists who were working in innovative ways and were at the cutting edge of new developments. The judges were nominated at the time when the competition was announced.

The fact that broad subject themes "Modern landscape", "Modern figure composition" and "Modern still life" were set for successive years was a challenge, particularly to the artists who were now working largely in the abstract, and also to the judges. However, after 1963 there were no more set subjects, and the 1966 and 1970 prizes were for sculpture.

There were judging panels of two or three, usually consisting of one artist, one art professional and one other. In the early years they included combinations of artists such as Weaver Hawkins, Roland Wakelin and Wallace Thornton, with gallery directors Robert Haines and Laurie Thomas, or with others, including art historian Bernard Smith and Mary Alice Evatt, one of the more progressive Trustees of the AGNSW. Max Harris was a frequent member because although he had no direct association with the visual arts, he was regarded with favour by Franco Belgiorno-Nettis as a critic who supported the unconventional.[105] Other critics who acted as judges on one occasion were Ross Lansell and Donald Brook. The latter was both a sculptor and a critic, but was critical of art competitions in general, and therefore an apparently unlikely choice for a judge.

The 1968 competition generated special controversy. The names of the judges were not announced in advance (perhaps because of difficulties in selecting them), an omission which brought criticism from the CAS, NSW, which explained that some artists will not exhibit if certain judges are appointed. It took the view that the recent unannounced addition of a judge such as Laurie Thomas, with decided affiliations, deprived artists of a chance to consider the full conditions of entry.[105] It was also less than enthusiastic about Harris and Brook as judges. There was a larger group of judges for the first sculpture competition in 1966, including Belgiorno-Nettis himself, Max Harris, Laurie Thomas and artists Douglas Annand and James Gleeson. In 1969 and 1970 Belgiorno-Nettis brought judges from overseas as a way of providing some stimulus to the local art community. James Fitzsimmons, Editor of *Art International,* was chosen because of his background in criticism, and Sir Roland Penrose, a friend of Picasso and a founder of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, because of his involvement with new art movements in Europe.[106] In 1970 and 1971 the prize was restricted to invited entrants only for painting and sculpture respectively. Winners during the earlier years of the *Prize* were painters such as Jon Molvig, Fred Williams, Roger Kemp, Andrew Sibley and John Peart,

most of whom were on the verge of reaching recognition, and sculptors such as Norma Redpath, who had already had some success. Overseas judges continued this trend with their awards to Ron Robertson-Swann in 1969 and Bill Clements in 1970. The prize was last awarded in 1971, and Transfield subsequently initiated the *Sydney Biennale*. The *Transfield Prize* was respected by artists, not only because of its value, but because of the intentions behind it. Its status was undoubtedly due to the fact that Franco Belgiorno-Nettis was himself deeply involved in its planning and organisation, and because he had a clear vision of what he wanted to achieve.

Two years after the inauguration of the *Transfield Prize*, the Melbourne department store of Georges Ltd established the *Georges Invitation Art Awards*, which were organised for it by Alan McCulloch, a critic, painter and writer. The awards for first and second prize winners and for young artists totalled the generous sum of one thousand guineas. Entries were to be accompanied by a drawing.

In his foreword to the catalogue for its first exhibition, McCulloch wrote of the dignity and individuality which the competition had acquired because of the fact that it was conducted by the newly formed Australian Division of the International Association of Art Critics.[108] He himself was the first President of the Australian Division, which had received help from Georges, probably in the form of funding, when it was in the process of being established.[109] The part played by the Association in relation to the arrangements for the competition is not clear, but it seems to have been to nominate the judges, and presumably also to select the artists to be invited to compete. In the first year of the award at least four of the five judges, Salec Minc, Earle Hackett, Daniel Thomas and McCulloch himself, were members of the Association, and in the second year the panel consisted of three members, with an American adviser, J. J. Sweeney, who was visiting Australia as World President of the International Association of Art Critics.[110]

In 1965, the third year of the award, three critics were elected by the Association, and the jury was further strengthened by the addition of artists John Olsen and Leonard French, who had been the first two prize winners, and were described in the catalogue as "notably articulate painters". The author of the catalogue was confident that this development would ensure "thorough and perhaps conscientious

analysis of every picture submitted". [111] It seems likely that it would also have ensured considerable discussion and possibly compromise decisions. Rather acidly the *Nation* art critic pointed out in 1970 that when McCulloch had ceased to be President of the Association he had taken the prize with him, and had thereafter chosen the judges himself. The judges then selected those to be invited to enter.[112] It is not clear when this change took place, but references to the Association in the catalogues cease after 1965, suggesting that it occurred during 1965.

Before the Award was made for the first time, the CAS had noted that one of the Association's first activities was to appoint a panel of judges for the *Georges Awards*. Later it warned against the Association's becoming identified with the *Awards*.[113] This warning was not explained, but it seems likely that the CAS felt that the Association should maintain its impartiality. Apart from these references, the Broadsheets apparently did not question the use of critics as judges, and did not suggest alternatives such as the use of artists.

There were usually panels of four and sometimes five judges. McCulloch himself was always a member. Members of the Association who acted as judges were impeccable choices. They included Gertrude Langer, Bernard Smith, Wallace Thornton, Donald Brook and James Gleeson. There was generally a mix of artists and teachers, gallery directors and curators, and critics with a relatively small proportion of artists. From 1972 onwards the panel included a representative of the Regional Galleries. Patrick McCaughey, who had first been a panel member in 1968, was included again several times. Visiting experts Clement Greenberg, the influential American critic, and Dr Harald Szeeman, a protagonist of the avant garde in Germany, acted as advisers to the judges in 1968 and 1971 respectively. The commentator in *Nation*, however, said that in 1968 even Greenberg had not been able to get McCulloch to accept his advice on the choice of winner. [114]

Some of the prize-winners such as John Olsen, Leonard French, Fred Williams, Andrew Sibley, Roger Kemp, Jan Senbergs, Fred Cress and Syd Ball were to become important artists. Some were also *Transfield* winners. Over the years, however, the *Georges Prize* seemed to become less attractive to emerging artists. This could have been due partly to the neutralising effect of a panel of judges, and partly to the fact that

after 1972 the conditions of the prize changed. There was still a winner, but four or five other selected paintings were purchased by Georges and presented to some Regional Galleries who were chosen by ballot as recipients. This meant that neither the judges nor the galleries themselves were involved in deciding which gallery should receive which prize, and, probably for this reason, it was not a universally popular scheme. The prize ended with the 1982 award.

The advent of the Australian Division of the International Association of Art Critics must have offered to Georges, or to McCulloch as the organiser of their competition, a welcome alternative to the public art galleries as a source of expertise in judging. Moreover, it was undoubtedly useful for publicity purposes to be able to refer to it and its international connections in relation to the *Georges Award.* The fact that McCulloch was involved with both this competition and the Association made it a useful arrangement for all concerned. The Association did not, however, actually provide any new expertise. It simply provided a pool of ideas. The juries which it picked consisted largely of critics who, depending on their experience, should have been able to judge all aspects of the entries with reasonable expertise. Inevitably however, they had their own idiosyncrasies, and many of them would have lacked the practical expertise of artists and the historical knowledge of curators.

The Tenth International Congress of Accountants was held in Sydney in October 1972, and was allowed to use the AGNSW for its opening reception. Perhaps as a gesture of appreciation, the Congress Committee organised an art competition in its honour. Sir Erik Langker, a long standing President of the Council of Trustees of the AGNSW and of the RAS, was the judge. The award of the prize to Lloyd Rees, an established painter, by this conservative judge was scarcely surprising.

In 1978 the *Sydney Morning Herald* began offering an annual art prize, the theme of which was to be the spirit and energy of Sydney or some other part of Australia. Clearly it was envisaged that what was needed to assess the entries when a theme of this type was specified was a panel representing a variety of interests. The judges for 1983 were Edmund Capon, Director of the AGNSW, Charles Lloyd-Jones, President of the Trustees of the AGNSW, Terence Maloon and Susanna

Short, both SMH art critics, the artist Tim Storrier and Noel Ciselowski, Director of the City of Sydney Cultural Council.[115] Similar, but sometimes smaller panels were usually appointed in subsequent years. It is interesting to speculate how the judging process would have operated in a situation where such different interests and backgrounds were involved.

Another award which was associated with the business of the sponsors was the *Australian Maritime Art Award*, established by the British shipping company ACTA in 1985. A broad subject was specified. Paintings or drawings entered were to depict commercial shipping and/or port based activities in Australia. In its first year the *Award* attracted more than 240 entries, many of them by amateurs. Many were tackling new subject matter. The paintings were judged by a committee consisting of Edmund Capon, Director of the AGNSW, Sir James Hardy, marine historian, Sir John Knott, Chairman of ACTA, and Christopher Cullen, its Managing Director. There was a unanimous decision in favour of the winner, Paul Jackson, and Capon claimed that he had successfully called the tune, to the point where there was no real dissent.[116] In later years the composition of the panel changed. Hardy remained Chairman, but there was a stronger representation of curatorial and artistic experience, such as Barry Pearce of the AGNSW, John Baily, Director of the AGSA, and artists John Firth-Smith and Kathlyn Ballard. Several of these reappeared on the 1991 panel, with the addition of Daina Fletcher, Curator at the Australian National Maritime Museum. About fifty works were exhibited, including the winner and eight finalists, and there was clearly a genuine attempt to represent the expertise of both artist and curator, with some input from the maritime sponsors. Apart from Cressida Campbell, who won in 1990, the winners tended to be newcomers to the art competition scene.

The scheme begun by the French firm of Moët & Chandon, and which it described as a visionary design to offer comprehensive support for young Australian artists and to establish a new tradition, was intended to demonstrate the prestige of the sponsor by its quality, and without specific advertising. It claimed to provide a rare kind of patronage, distinct from the commercial galleries and curator-selected exhibitions.[117] It centered on a Fellowship, offering the winning artist study experience in Paris, complemented by an exhibition which toured

the major public art galleries in Australia, and also by gifts to enable these galleries to purchase contemporary Australian art.[118] The intention was to provide a continuing overview of contemporary art for the public, and to offer artists a series of opportunities to have their work recognised. Obviously the standard of this scheme depended on the status and decisions of the judges, and the catalogues have consistently praised their interest and concern. Panels of judges, varying between five and three were always used. They consisted of a mixture of artists (occasionally including previous winners), gallery staff (usually a specialist curator rather than the Director), art teachers and commercial gallery operators, and therefore could be expected to be reasonably in sympathy with young artists.

There were large numbers of entries, of the order of 700 in 1987 and 800 in 1996, and in that year a separate pre-selection panel was instituted to select twenty or so entries for final judging and for exhibition. Although pre-selection might have resulted in some inconsistencies in judging, it was probably inevitable if judges were to have adequate time for assessing the final selection. The judges' decision in the first year was unanimous, but in subsequent years there must have been differences of opinion within the panel. There are hints of this in John Neylon's suggestion in 1993 that each judge be allowed to select one work from the Refuses to be exhibited, while in the following year Peter Timms made the provocative suggestion that all entries should be shown in order to keep judges accountable, and also to give the public a comprehensive view of current trends in art in Australia. [119] Be that as it may, the judges seem to have succeeded in meeting the sponsors' wishes to recognise and help innovative and intellectual young artists.

Another commercially sponsored competition with special judging arrangements is the acquisitive *Kedumba Art Prize*, which was first awarded in 1990, and is sponsored by firms in the Blue Mountains and a local art society. This is a small operation, but its sponsors regard it as a community asset, and it has high standards. There are two phases of judging. The first is the selection of about twenty artists who are invited to submit entries. This initial selection has always been made by Hendrik Kolenberg, Curator of Australian Prints, Drawings and Watercolours at the AGNSW, an arrangement which should help to ensure overall balance and consistency in the resulting collection, but could also over time reflect a limited viewpoint. The entries which are

received are assessed by one judge, and judges have included established artists of the calibre of John Coburn, Jan Senbergs, Kevin Connor and James Gleeson.[120]

The intention behind the *Silk Cut Acquisitive Award for Linocut Prints* was to draw attention to the sponsor's products. The award was begun and run by Duroloid, a firm specialising in production of special linoleum for printmaking, with the specific purpose of encouraging the art of linocut prints. The competition was, however, developed in consultation with the Print Council of Australia, so that its planning had considerable input from the actual practitioners. The Print Council appoints the judges each year, originally two, and later three.[121] Their names are announced beforehand. So far, judges have been artists and/or teachers or experienced print-makers. For example, the judges in 1995 were Daniel Moynihan, artist and lecturer in charge of printmaking at the RMIT, and Anne Virgo, Director of the Australian Print Workshop, Melbourne. Judges for 1998 were Anne Kirker, Curator of Prints and Drawings at the QAG, Les Kossatz, artist and teacher, and Diane Macleod, a writer and curator.[122] There have been large numbers of entries, and the collection of the prints selected by the judges forms a practical educational resource.

The 1990's have seen a return to the big commercially sponsored competition, with prizes bigger than ever before. In Victoria, for example. there was the new departure of the *Contempora5*, in which the State Government and commercial sponsors co-operated in financing a lavish prize, and the *Seppelt Art Award*, staged jointly by the Museum of Contemporary Art and Seppelts. Both have already been discussed among gallery-based competitions.

Another competition which was sponsored jointly by government and a commercial enterprise was the *LSFA Fellowship Award*, which was a product of co-operation between the Government's Arts 21 and the accountancy firm of Lowenstein Sharp Feiglin Ades.[123] It was aimed at mid-career artists, and offered the winner a prize of $40,000 in exchange for the donation of a work to the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Rather than actually submitting work, artists were asked to submit a project-proposal. These were judged by a single judge, who in the first year was Barry Pearce, Senior Curator of Australian Art at the AGNSW. He commented that he felt additional responsibility

because he couldn't hide behind the other judges.[124] In 1998 Trustees of the Fellowship, who included a partner in Lowestein Sharp, an artist, two galley directors and an art consultant, selected the twelve artists who were to be invited to submit proposals.[125]

The *Visy Board Prize* was aimed at relatively well known artists who were invited to compete. Its first award in 1997 was judged by a strong panel consisting of critic Giles Auty, former gallery director Daniel Thomas, and gallery directors Ronald Radford and Frances Lindsay. Auty, in his capacity as critic, was critical of the absence of rules and the need to choose only one winner.[126]

Observations

This review of commercially based competitions is highly selective in relation to aspects such as the period and size of the prize and the types of commercial undertakings which have sponsored art competitions. It does not include the major *Doug Moran National Portrait Prize*, which has been classed as a competition sponsored by an individual because of Moran's professed personal concern to foster a certain kind of portraiture, but which in effect is no doubt administered to a significant extent by the Moran Health Care Group Pty. Ltd. and is able to make use of its facilities. Moreover, it does not include the many competitions which have been sponsored nominally by firms such as Caltex and Shell, but which have actually been begun and run by a variety of groups within the community.

The rationale for the existence of commercially sponsored competitions is that they are supporting art altruistically, but they are inevitably designed to appeal to a targetted audience. To do so successfully, they must be presented to this audience in a way which is both interesting and credible. It is essential that they are seen to be managing the competition well, and that high standards are maintained. It is therefore important for sponsors to employ judges whose status and expertise are established, and who can be expected to be knowledgeable and impartial in their assessment of entries.

Art professionals, such as gallery directors or well known and established artists, or, more recently, academics and critics, have been suitable candidates for judging. Some individualists such as Franco Belgiorno-Nettis and Doug Moran have, however, chosen their judges

on a more personal basis, and have experimented with types and combinations of judges to achieve a particular result. In the case of the *Transfield Prize*, for example, the aim was to encourage artists to be adventurous, and in the case of the *Doug Moran Prize* to encourage them to work in a particular traditional style. Importing judges from overseas as Doug Moran has consistently done, could be motivated by a kind of Australian cultural cringe, or perhaps as an indication that they are likely to be more impartial than the local judges. In either case it sounds impressive and therefore has good public relations value.

Judges clearly have a major responsibility to both sponsors and artists which is especially obvious in cases where large prizes are offered. In theory this fact favours the use of panels which share this responsibility and may seem likely to provide a balance of experience and taste. Varying permutations of judges may, however, also arrive at compromise decisions which are essentially inconclusive.

Competitions held to promote ideas

There is a category of sponsors who stage art competitions as a way of presenting a specific message. To put it bluntly, their intention is to use the works of art generated by the competition as vehicles of a kind of propaganda. This is done with varying degrees of subtlety, and in some cases, the competitors are almost expected to be illustrators rather than creative artists. These competitions present special problems of judging if the entries are to be assessed both for their artistic qualities and for their success in expressing the sponsor's message.

A very early example of a competition of this kind in Australia was the *First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work* in 1907, which was administered by an elaborate system of state and central committees, with the aim of showing what was being done by Australian women in craft and art. There were both competitive and non-competitive sections, the former with prizes, for example for the "Best Australian landscape", but the judges are not known.[127] There was some pre-selection in the States, except in the case of Victoria, where almost all the entries were competitive, and all therefore had to be sent in, to hang "frame to frame... in unbroken rows, from line to sky-line...".[128]

The *Australia at War Exhibition* held in 1945 was also ideologically motivated. Its intention was to show the public aspects of the war effort, and incidentally to demonstrate the skills and patriotism of Australian artists. It had distinguished patrons in industry and the armed services, and was planned to include a number of sections showing the activities of all branches of the services. Over 700 entries were received and prizes were donated. There were sixteen sections, covering various theatres of war and the home front, and catering for professional artists, amateurs and servicemen. Judging was a complex process, which began with a preliminary selection by committees of artists in some States, and ended with final judging by committee of eight, consisting of gallery directors and artists.[129] The organisers seem to have had no difficulty in rewarding artistic excellence rather than merely illustration.

It was different with the *Blake Prize for Religious Art*, the enduring icon of ideologically motivated art competitions in Australia. The judging of the annual competitions which culminated in the award of the prize each year created profound tensions within the committee which administered it about the perceived intentions of the competition. The resulting uncertainty in turn had significant effects for artists who decided to enter or not to enter. The history of the *Blake Prize* is reviewed in Appendix 3, but I will discuss here some aspects of the judging.

The Committee which initiated the *Blake Prize* in 1951 consisted of clergy and other enthusiastic supporters of religious art. It announced that its purpose was to stimulate interest in religious art among Australian artists. It was a bold, if perhaps naive, attempt to change the perceptions of the churches, the public and artists about the role of art in relation to religion. Having invited entries for the first award, the Committee appointed a selection committee which made a preliminary choice of entries to be formally judged, and a judging committee of five including Catholic cleric Father Michael Scott, one of the founders of the Prize, Presbyterian cleric Rev. Alan Tory, artist Jean Bellette, the Hon. Justice Nicholas and committee members John D. Moore, an architect and Donna Balzo, wife of the Italian ambassador. Their award of the Prize to Justin O'Brien's *The Virgin enthroned*, a representation of a traditional subject, was a popular choice.

This was an auspicious beginning, and the Blake Committee continued to appoint representative judging committees, usually consisting of one layman, two artists and two clergymen, one Catholic and one non-Catholic. Father Scott was a dominating figure. Rosemary Crumlin, in her reports of interviews with the protagonists, describes how in 1954 he insisted against the judgement of the artists on the panel that the award be given to Charles Bannon's painting because it communicated with him, rather than to James Gleeson's entry, which did not, a decision which was to generate much criticism.[129] There were other complications such as the fact that in some years there was a separate selection committee, so that the judges were not involved in the selection process, while in other years they were also the selectors.[130]

Although well known art professionals such as Eric Westbrook, Director of the NGV, Hal Missingham, Director of the AGNSW and art historian Bernard Smith acted as judges, the Committee soon became concerned about the suitability of some entries from the religious viewpoint. Scott was concerned that some abstract paintings were unintelligible, and could not be considered religious unless they contained a religious symbol. The Prize was therefore to be given to the best work which the judges considered intelligible as a religious painting.[131] The committee, however, discussed the possibility of giving guidance to both judges and artists on religious requirements. It stressed the need for religious art to be didactic, and to relate to specific theological truths in a way which was intelligible to the perceptive seeker. Lloyd Rees, an artist member of the Society who had acted as a judge, suggested that some religious thought was not completely abstract, and questioned how the Committee could expect to direct an artist who must clearly make technical decisions personally.[132] As a solution, Scott proposed that clerical members of the judging committee should determine the religious content of entries before the actual judging took place (presumably rejecting irreligious entries) and that similarly artist members would have a right to reject badly painted pictures, [133] a pragmatic view of an art competition as a form of patronage which is entitled to specify the results which it wants to receive.

The debate climaxed in 1961 when the judges unanimously awarded the prize to Stanislaus Rapotec's abstract painting *Meditating on Good Friday*. Scott was strongly critical of it as art, and especially as

religious art. The Chairman negotiated a solution, and in doing so made two significant points. Firstly, he noted that the Society could, if it wished, give effect to its ideals through the choice of judges, and secondly that he did not think that the Society should attempt to impose any philosophy of art on the competition.[134] The Society does not seem to have taken up his first suggestion, but it does seem to have acted on the second.

By 1964 the Society had committed itself to keeping abreast of new movements in art, including abstraction, and a few years later it was stressing the potential spiritual meaning of an abstract religious painting. By 1970 it had defined religious art as work which the artist believed to be religious, so that it was no longer necessary for judges to assess whether or not it was religious.[135] Since then prizes have been given to a variety of works, often abstract and unconventional.

Judges for the prize were always chosen by the Committee, but the Minutes do not reveal on what basis this was done. Clearly, they had to be in sympathy with the general aims of the Society. There was generally one representative from the Roman Catholic Church and one other religious representative, often Anglican or Presbyterian. It might have been difficult to recruit suitable artist judges, but those who served were usually well known artists, often with some experience in judging, such as Lloyd Rees, Tom Bass, Nancy Borlase, James Gleeson, Guy Warren, Colin Lanceley and Elwyn Lynn. The Reverend Alan Dougan, a member of the Society, writing to Russell Drysdale regretted the latter's inability to act as a judge, and said that the *Blake* needed the best judges that it could get, but that it was hard to get good judges and harder for the *Blake* than for others.[135] He mentioned perpetual criticism on the one hand that the work of good abstract painters was not shown, and, on the other, that only non-representational work was shown.[136] In 1987 it was decided to have only one expert judge, an experiment which was not repeated because the judge appointed, Alun Leach-Jones, rather than choosing a winner divided the prize money between four competitors. After that, the number of judges was reduced to three, usually a theologian, an artist and an art critic or administrator. Panels of this type probably found it easier to reach consensus than the original five person committees. Although their decisions have attracted annual criticism, the controversy of the 1960s on the question of the relationship between religion and art has never

been repeated, and the Society has never challenged the decisions of judges. It has to be admitted, however, that the perception of conflict between contemporary art and religious intelligibility gave the competition much of its early vitality, particularly in view of the special intensity which seems to be part of any controversy involving religious issues. It is a matter for respect that the judges have not succumbed to one or the other, and that they have continued to reward artistic excellence in the context of new trends such as abstract art.

A Western Australian complement to the *Blake Prize* is the *Mandorla Art Award* for religious art, which was held annually between 1985 and 1996. The organisers of the Award set a theme each year for the major prize, based on a scriptural text, a device which was tried briefly but abandoned by the Blake Society. Some artists are invited to enter on the basis of their past performance, and others apply independently. Although in the choice of judges, less emphasis seems to have been placed on religious representation than in the *Blake Prize*, the position is that in the *Mandorla Award* the subject was automatically religious. Judges for the 1996 Award were headed by Lou Klepac, curator and art historian, and included Paula Latos-Valier, Director of the AGWA, Anna Gray, a curator at the UWA, Ted Snell of the School of Art at Curtin University, and Veronica Brady, a nun, and also an Associate Professor of English at the UWA. The Mandorla Centre organisers consider that it is essential for judges to be impartial, expert and sympathetic.[137] Father Ross, a patron of the group, said that it was a criterion of the prize that the average viewer must be able to understand the painting,[138] a requirement which echoes the Blake experience, and places a special responsibility on the judges. Of other recent awards for religious art, the *Mary McKillop Award* was judged by a representative group consisting of Gallery Director Betty Churcher, academic Rosemary Crumlin and painter Colin Lancely, while the judge for the *Needham Prize* in Mount Gambier was appropriately the critic Giles Auty who had originally inspired the establishment of the prize.[139]

There are some ideologically based competitions other than those for religious art. For example, for two years, the Law Society of NSW ran a $3,000 art prize as part of its functions in Law Week,[140] an event which it described as "a community education program designed to promote greater understanding of the law, the legal system and the

legal profession". The theme for the 1985 prize was the effect of the law on today's world, especially in Australia. Documentation of the prize itself does not name the judges, but photographs in the *Law Journal* show that Fred Cress was the winner and that Mr Justice Kirby was a judge.

The *National Aboriginal Indigenous Heritage Art Award*, which was first offered in 1994, is based on a specific subject approach. It is linked to the Register of the National Estate, which in the past has been overwhelmingly concerned with places and structures relating to European settlement, while the places of Aboriginal interest which it does record were mainly selected by non-indigenous Australians.[141] The intention of the *Award* is to encourage Aboriginal artists to express the significance of places which they choose, and which are probably not sacred sites. They therefore need to understand and accept the Western concepts on which the competition is based. These include the idea of recording buildings and sites which warrant preservation because of historical interest, as distinct from their traditional significance, the challenge of expressing their own ideas in the form of art, and the prospect of the works of art which they submit being judged by unknown judges in order to choose a winner from among the entries.

The special requirements of the *National Indigenous Heritage Art Award* become clearer when it is contrasted with the *National Aboriginal Art Award*, which is based in the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, and has been operating since 1984. This award also attracts entries from Aboriginal artists working in the cities, the rural areas and the bush, with a strong emphasis on the community arts organisations, many of them previously unknown. It offers prizes for the best work in five categories and is judged by two judges, usually artists and curators, but not necessarily Aboriginal. Works entered are judged mainly on an aesthetic basis.[142]

By contrast, the *Heritage Award* has to take account of the extra dimension of expressing the artist's feelings about places. There have usually been three judges, two of Aboriginal descent with relevant art experience, and one who has had experience as a curator of Aboriginal art. In 1998 they were a well qualified group consisting of Bill Jonas, Director of the National Museum of Australia, Chairman of the ACT

Heritage Council and former Chairman of the Newcastle Awabakal Aboriginal Co-operative, Rhoda Roberts, an Aboriginal writer with considerable experience in the media, and Margie West, Curator of Aboriginal Arts at the MAGANT.[143] Because of the numbers expected, there was pre-selection by slides. When the works selected were received, the judges had to assess over 200 entries in order to choose works to be exhibited and also winners for five categories in addition to the main prize. Entries came from artists working in situations which ranged from remote bush settlements to capital cities, and whose artistic background varied correspondingly. They varied greatly in format and style and in their degree of sophistication in terms of either Aboriginal or Western art. Most of the entries were accompanied by a written explanation by the artist of the background to the work, so that these statements also had to be considered by the judges. Judging was clearly a demanding task, and it is to the credit of the judges that they provided reasons for their choice in each case.

Another ideologically motivated competition dealing with aboriginal art, but on a smaller scale, is the *RAKA Award*. It was established by art historian Bernard Smith in honour of his wife, and is offered for the visual arts every fifth year. There are two non-indigenous and two indigenous members, both with curatorial experience, on the judging panel and there is pre-selection by slides before the final judging.[143] Some ideologically motivated prizes such as the *Rainforest Art Competition*, held by the Botanical Gardens in Sydney in 1990 and aimed at school children, were frankly didactic, and judging arrangements do not seem to have been publicised.

War memorials are intended to present an emotional message to a varied audience over a long period. The complex character of these memorials, which had to be impressive, evocative and functional, must present a complex task of adjudication. The panel of judges had to reach agreement in assessing these aspects, and they also had to negotiate with competitors on possible variations to the original concept. The *Vietnam War Memorial* provides a good example of the procedure. A steering committee drew up general criteria for the memorial, and a representative working group chose an assessor panel consisting of representatives of the Committee, the National Capital Planning Authority, the Department of Veteran's Affairs, and two sculptors. Fifteen of the eighty-eight entries were asked to submit

Stage 1 design proposals, and five of these were selected to submit a detailed description and a model of the proposed memorial. Some areas needing clarification or modification were discussed before the numbers were reduced to three, and finally to one. No doubt, discussions continued throughout the process of erecting the memorial. The panel for the *Nurses Memorial* was similar, except that there were more representatives of the sponsor group. This *Memorial*, of course, had a much longer perspective to present. Competition Rules provided that the Sponsor Group might enter into a contract with the successful competitor on matters such as aspects of design, construction or erection, and that the Intellectual Property in the proposal becomes the property of the Commonwealth when the fees are paid to a competitor, clearly indicating that the designer retains no rights as an artist.

Observations

I have defined all other categories of competitions in terms of their sponsors. In them, judging is based on aesthetic grounds, although it is influenced indirectly if not directly, by the intention of the sponsor. There is a difference in ideologically inspired competitions, because of the two factors which are involved - success in expressing a message, and artistic excellence. However the judging is done, it seems to be virtually inevitable that the result will be a compromise. This is usually an unsatisfactory result and it admittedly occurs in other competitions, particularly when they are judged by a panel, but it is peculiarly unsatisfactory when it is not clear whether the result can be attributed to perceived artistic excellence or to success in expressing a message, or to a proportion of both. It tends to place the artist in an unfortunately indeterminate position, and it can also be confusing for viewers who do not understand the basis for the decision. The position is perhaps clearer in the case of the national memorials, because the judging has to take account of relatively well defined requirements. Success in this field provides special recognition for the artist, but in a limited field.

Competitions sponsored by organisations in the community

I have discussed the approaches to judging used in some broad categories of art competitions. They do not include many other less professionally oriented competitions which have been held throughout the country and which are usually generated by enthusiasts in the local

community primarily for the benefit of the community itself. They offer local artists opportunities for exhibition and possible sales of their work, and are likely to be of interest to the community in general. There are tremendous variations in the standard and intention of these competitions. Some are staged regularly over long periods, and others only once or twice. They may be run by local art groups or service clubs such as Rotary or Lions, or by educational or charitable organisations. They may form part of local festivals.

As was the case in relation to competitions held by the less professional artists' societies, it is not easy to establish in general what types of judges were used, and how they were selected by the various community organisations which staged art competitions.

The same sources of information about the judges who served were used, namely the lists from *A and A* and the selective Survey of art competitions,[145] but it seems likely that proportionately fewer of these competitions sponsored by the community organisations would have been reported in *A and A*. The index of judges which was prepared contains a number of names of judges whose field of expertise could not be traced, and who, in many cases were recorded as judges on only one occasion.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to look at a selection of the judges for some of these amateur competitions on a State by State basis. In NSW, the *Berrima District Art Prize*, which began in the 1950s, usually had one judge each year, and they included artists such as Eva Kubbos, painter/teachers Robin Norling and Wallace Thornton, critics such as Mervyn Horton, and gallery director Daniel Thomas. The Campbelltown *Festival of Fisher's Ghost* competition was judged by painter/critics or painter/teachers such as John Henshaw and Peter Laverty, and sculptor Tom Bass. Judges for the *Cheltenham Girls' High School Art Prize* included artists such as John Coburn, Peter Laverty, Douglas Dundas and Reinis Zusters, in panels of two or three. The

Currabubula Red Cross Art Exhibition judges included some of the same artists and also James Gleeson, Joshua Smith and Fred Bates. The *Tumut Art Exhibition*, which began in 1957, employed Hal Missingham, Director of the AGNSW early in its lifetime, and then moved on to well known artists including Leonard French, William Dargie and Roland Wakelin, and curators Daniel Thomas and Tony Tuckson. The *Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club Award* was judged on different occasions by Sir Erik Langker, President of the Trustees of the AGNSW, and Sir James Hardy. The Robin Hood Committee also had some distinguished names in its panels of judges, including gallery owner Kim Bonython, critic and teacher Dr Gertrude Langer, artists John Olsen and Henry Salkauskas, and gallery director Laurie Thomas.

There were fewer competitions of this kind in Victoria. The Art Group in Beaumaris, a suburb of Melbourne, had its paintings judged by artist Fred Williams and Alan Warren, a painter, teacher and critic, and also by Patrick McCaughey, critic, academic and gallery director. William Dargie was an adjudicator for the *Dandenong Festival of Music and Art* and the *Camberwell Rotary Club Art Show*, both of which had single judges, usually painters who were also teachers, such as John Rowell, John Duncan Firth, Edward Heffernan and Max Wilks. Rotary Clubs in Mornington, Numurkah and Korumburra, which also ran art prizes, seemed to favour artists who were teachers as their judges. The Echuca Art Group had the local schoolteacher as judge in 1973, but by 1996 was employing Cecilia Osborne, a Melbourne artist.

In Queensland the *Redcliffe Art Contest* has been held annually since 1964. In its early years judges were usually artists of the status of Kathleen Shillam, a sculptor and teacher, artist Margaret Olley, William Dargie, Douglas Dundas, painter and sculptor Hugh Sawrey and painter and teacher John Rigby. Raoul Mellish, Director of the QAG, judged in 1975, but judges have usually been artists. The *Stanthorpe Apple and Grape Harvest Festival Purchase* had judges such as William Dargie and Tom Bass, and artist/critic Elwyn Lynn in the 1970 s. The *Darnell de Gruchy Art Prize* was judged in 1969 by Dr G. Langker, President of the Queensland Division of the Arts Council, Frank Thompson, of the Queensland University Press and the donor.

The *Sir Hans Heysen Memorial Art Prize* in South Australia was judged in 1986 by David Dridan, an artist who also taught and managed a

gallery. In Western Australia the *Kalgoorlie Lions Club Art Competition* was judged in 1973 by Owen Garde, a painter who ran his own art school, and the *Katanning Art Prize* was judged by Cherry Lewis, an art valuer, and Robert Birch, painter and teacher. The *Tasmanian Blue Gum Festival* in 1971 employed Alan McCulloch, then the organiser of the prestigious *Georges Awards* in Melbourne.

Overall, NSW was most prolific in prizes of this kind, but they were offered in all states. Judging by only one judge seems to have been much more common than judging by a panel, perhaps because of the cost and difficulty of assembling a panel, particularly in country areas. Artists or artist/teachers seem to have been the most popular judges. All judges seem to have been very willing to travel in order to adjudicate, but local artists have often been used in smaller competitions, adding to the feeling that it is a community event. Judges who were courageous enough to stay on for the opening of the show have often performed a special service by commenting, generally or individually, on the entries. The presence of expert judges, and the words of wisdom which they may utter, provide practical encouragement for local artists, and make a significant contribution to the public profile of art. I will discuss the individual contributions made by some judges in the next chapter.

Observations

This chapter has reviewed arrangements for judging in terms of sponsors and their expectations. For them, judges supply the professional climax of the competition. Perhaps even more important, they establish its status, and it is a bonus if they do so in accordance with the ideas of the sponsor, or alternatively in a way which will create an acceptable degree of publicity through controversy.

The fact that sponsors choose judges may give them some influence over decisions, but they cannot control the personal reaction of judges to the art objects which are submitted to them. Judges who officiate as individuals therefore have a considerable degree of responsibility, and have to be prepared to stand by their own viewpoint. Panels of judges may seem to sponsors to be desirable because they should provide balanced decisions. They should also provide mutual support, and they may represent different aspects of expertise, especially where, as in the *Blake Prize*, several factors are represented in one competition. There

is, however, always the possibility that they may not be able to avoid compromise decisions which do not reflect a clear philosophy. Judges, whether acting singly or as part of a panel, have a major responsibility affecting artists which is not often mentioned - that of deciding which entries will not be exhibited.

The basis on which judging in art competitions in Australia generally operates seems to be different from the assessment of the many "juried" competitions which are held in the USA. The *American Artist* usually lists some forty competitions throughout the country, some organised by bodies such as the American Watercolour Society and Allied Artists of America, some by commercial organisations, and a small proportion by art institutions. In almost all cases jurying is done on the basis of slides, and there is often a requirement for realist paintings of specific subjects such as the human figure or animals in art. Awards are small, and the aim of the exercise seems to be to select items for exhibition Estimated numbers of viewers are sometimes stated. It seems obvious that the event is aimed at viewers and sales, rather than purely at artistic excellence and originality, an interpretation which is confirmed by some accounts of unsatisfactory shows. A booklet published by the Ontario Arts Council distinguished between the kind of juried show described above, and judged shows, inclusion in which is more open, and which centre on the determination of awards.[146] Since 1967 the Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art has sponsored annual awards to artists of promise whose work has not been widely recognised, a sponsorship which seems to be similar in intention to prizes such as the *Clemenger* and *Rigg* prizes in Australia.147

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CHAPTER 6

THE JUDGES

Some individuals who acted as judges have already been mentioned in relation to particular competitions. It is important, however, to know more about those who have, over the years, accepted the challenge of arbitrating between thousands of works of art in competitions throughout the country, and in doing so have helped to create the standard and the atmosphere of each event.

It is not easy to assemble a reliable overview. The news of art competitions which is published in the press and in periodicals is usually concerned chiefly either with the artists who won, or with discussions of those artists whom the writer considers should have won. Judges may be mentioned, especially when their decisions are regarded as controversial or particularly discerning, but they do not figure consistently, and in any case it would be a huge task to trace press references to the judges in a representative group of competitions in this way. The most useful continuous source of general information about judges is the section "Competitions and Prizes", which appeared in *Art and Australia* from vol. 1, no. 1 in 1963 to vol. 30, no. 2 in 1992.[1] The announcements of results in this section often name the judges. This is not, however, a comprehensive source, because the entries are presumably dependent on information submitted by competition organisers who, while they may be careful to send in advance notices of forthcoming competitions, are not necessarily so concerned with publication of the results. However, the listings do provide useful information, beginning with the period when art competitions were becoming particularly popular, and it seems reasonable to assume that this information is complete enough to give a good indication of the kinds of people who served as judges.

Other sources are much more disparate, and do not really warrant the detailed search which would be necessary to trace incomplete information. For major and continuing competitions based in art institutions, the formal records of the organisation concerned usually refer to judges, but these records are not always available. In the case of the many other competitions, and in particular those which were supported by commercial organisations or community groups, fewer

records survive, and the effort of tracing them would not be justified by the piecemeal results.

The selective Survey of Sponsors of Art Competitions, which was carried out as part of the present project in 1997, provides some information, mainly for more recent competitions.[2] Respondents were asked to name the judges of the first and/or last competition held. Most of those who replied were able to supply information about recent competitions only, but one or two of them, such as the Albury Regional Art Centre and the Tumut Art Society, had complete list of judges over the whole period of their competitions.

It is significant that biographical information about those who have acted as judges rarely gives them credit for this service. For example, entries for artists in McCulloch's *Encyclopedia of Australian Art* meticulously list the awards which they have received, but rarely mention their own contributions as adjudicators.[3] In the same way, the entries for art competitions and prizes mention only the winners. The recorded interviews with artists and other art professionals which have been carried out for the National Library are concerned primarily with their own work, and seldom mention other activities such as judging. Hal Missingham's autobiography is an exception, but even it refers specifically to only a few competitions, notably the *Helena Rubinstein Travelling Scholarship*, of which he was Chairman throughout its existence, and also the *Wynne*, *Archibald* and *Sulman* prizes, in the judging of which he had no part. It presents his role as judge in the context of the frustration s with which he enjoyed grappling in his job as Director of the AGNSW.[4] In general, it seems that judging was considered an activity of secondary importance.

Statistical review of judges

A statistical review of the performance of judges has been prepared from the information available from the two major sources mentioned above, namely *Art and Australia* and the Survey, with a few additions. It does not include the period before 1963, nor does it cover the judging carried out by the Trustees of the AGNSW, although in some cases, such as the *Sulman* and *Portia Geach* Prizes, they were responsible for nominating judges. A table summarising the results is at Page 229. Obviously it does not cover all art competitions, but it seems useful as an indication of relative numbers in the different categories of judges.

NUMBERS OF JUDGES
(based on 1st year in which they judged)

2+ = Those who judged more than once
1 = Those who seem to have judged only once

Type of Expertise	60s			70s			80s			90s			
	2+	1	T	2+	1	T	2+	1	T	2+	1	T	
Artist	69	24	93	31	28	59	30	48	78	8	19	27	257
Artist/Teacher	16	2	18	7	1	8	5	2	7	-	3	3	36
Academic	3	1	4	3	4	7	1	2	3	-	1	1	15
Gallery	20	4	24	18	2	20	16	5	21	5	4	9	74
Critic	-	4	4	2	1	3	2	1	3	-	2	2	12
Other	7	7	14	6	5	11	7	11	18	1	5	5	49
Not Known	12	27	39	10	45	55	23	86	109	6	61	67	270
	127	69	184	77	86	163	84	155	239	20	95	115	713

Judges more than once = 308
Judges only once = 405

It attempts to show the numbers of judges in relation to the year in which they began judging, as distinct from the numbers of competitions which they judged. Some, having begun to function as judges, continued to officiate on several occasions, while others seem to have done so only once. The numbers in these two categories have been recorded for each decade. The table also attempts to differentiate between the major categories of expertise which qualified judges to act - whether they were artists, or artists who were also teachers or lecturers, or whether, rather than being practising artists, they were academics, gallery staff, or critics, or had some other kind of expertise. It has not been possible to identify a number of judges in terms of their expertise, and this "unknown" category becomes increasingly large in the later decades.

Some judges continued to act for several years. An estimate, based on the sources mentioned above, is that on the average they have judged intermittently for something like seven years. This means, of course, that there were some who acted for much longer, and there is a particularly dedicated group of about thirty, most of whom began judging in the 1960s, and who acted as judges ten or more times. In this situation their expertise developed with their experience. They were obviously influential. I will discuss some representatives of this group in more detail later. Increasingly, it seems to have become common for judges to have acted only once. This may reflect the situation in country areas, where local artists are often used, and where it seems desirable to keep changing them from year to year to provide different viewpoints. It is worth noting that in general judges travelled within their own state, but that in several cases they judged in other states.

It seems possible to identify some general changes over the years. For example, artists and artists who were also teachers were the most popular judges in the earlier decades, but they appear to have become gradually less so, and have not been used repeatedly to the same extent. Gallery directors and curators seem to have retained much the same presence all through, presumably being called upon for the competitions aimed at more professional artists, and for the authority which they might provide. Academics and critics have not acted as judges frequently. The "other" category includes people without

technical artistic expertise, such, for example, as the clerical advisers in the *Blake Prize*, and the people with an interest in the arts in general, as distinct from the visual arts, who were used in the *Transfield Prize*. One statistic which has not been included is the number of women who acted as judges, as against the great majority of men. I have not calculated this in detail, but in general terms it is about 12% over the whole period, which means that there were virtually no women judges in the earlier periods.

Individual judges

Statistics are a useful way of defining the situation in general terms, but it is the individual personalities which have influenced the way in which the competition organism has actually functioned. I will therefore discuss briefly the background of some of the more popular judges. The artists William Dargie and Douglas Dundas were two of the earliest. Dargie, who was born in 1912, had a long career as a judge. He began at least as early as 1946, and judged a total of about eighteen competitions, the last in 1992. His credentials included the fact that he had won prizes at Geelong and Bendigo in 1940, that he was an official war artist in World War II, and that he won the *Archibald Prize* eight times in the 1940 s and 1950 s. He was essentially a portraitist. He was head of the NGV Art School for five years, and was on various high level advisory bodies. His knighthood, conferred in 1970, confirmed his status as an elder statesman in the art world. This status obviously impressed competition organisers such as the Bendigo Art Gallery, the Tumut Art Society and the Camberwell Rotary Club (for whom he judged several times between 1972 and 1992), and also sponsors such as Doug Moran (for whom he judged in 1988), and he judged in Queensland and Victoria as well as NSW. Dargie was, however, an uncompromising realist and a follower of the Meldrum doctrine of tonal painting, and he had little sympathy with contemporary movements in art, and in particular with abstract painting. His report on the award of the *Bendigo Prize* for 1952 commended the winner for being "the only naturally painted landscape..." with "all the virtues of the best traditional approach", whereas most of the other entries were striving to be different, "the cause of many unfortunate trends in Australian Art to-day".[5] These rather reactionary views were no doubt reflected in his other judgements.

Douglas Dundas was in great demand as a judge from the 1950's onwards. He officiated at a total of about twenty-four competitions before his final adjudication in 1974. He too was a judge for the *Bendigo Prize*, and for a number of competitions in Sydney suburbs and country towns, and he also judged the *Sulman* and *Portia Geach* awards. As a young man he had won the *Society of Artists Travelling Scholarship* and studied overseas. He was an influential member of the community of artists and was knowledgeable about its politics, especially those of artists' societies. He was President of the Society of Artists for a long period.[6] At one stage he was an adviser to the NGV and later a Trustee of the AGNSW. He taught at the East Sydney Technical College for thirty years and was head of the National Art School for several years.[7] Although his own work was traditional he was a sympathetic interpreter of new developments. He was therefore highly qualified in terms of experience, status and personality to be a judge.

By the 1960s there were a number of people who were repeatedly called on to judge a variety of competitions, mainly in NSW. In addition to artists, who earlier had often been the most popular judges, they now included professional gallery personnel. Gallery Trustees do not seem to have been invited to officiate. One of the most influential of the curators was Hal Missingham, who officiated alone or with other judges at more than twenty competitions during the late 1950s and early 1970s. Most of these were in Sydney or rural NSW, but he also travelled further afield to judge in Mildura, Perth and Brisbane. Missingham had studied art in Sydney and later studied and taught in London.[8] When he returned to Australia he worked for Sydney Ure Smith, and after war service his application for the position of Director of the AGNSW was, rather to his surprise, successful. This was at the time when the Trustees closely controlled most of the Gallery's operations and regarded the Director as an employee who did their bidding. His autobiography pulls few punches about the constant frustration by the Trustees and the Public Service Board of his efforts to organise and develop the Gallery professionally, to support contemporary Australian artists by buying their work, and at the same time to educate the Australian public about it.

Missingham saw the role of the Gallery as being largely educational, and considered that the Director and curatorial staff should involve themselves in educational tasks, among which he included judging

competitions.[9] One of his innovations was to organise major exhibitions of the work of significant Australian painters. He had a gift for friendship, particularly with artists, and in an interview he said that he made friends easily - he utterly believed in everybody.[10] He was cynical about the judging of the *Archibald Prize* by the Trustees, and about the multitude of prizes staged by local government organisations, although he did not denigrate some other prizes such as the *Helena Rubinstein Travelling Scholarship*. Nevertheless, he and the Gallery staff were always helpful in giving advice to aspiring sponsors, and in particular in urging them to make the prizes generous and non-acquisitive, and thus more attractive to professional artists.[11]

It is significant that it was under his administration that the AGNSW began issuing lists of forthcoming competitions annually, so that artists could plan which, if any, they were going to enter. Clearly, Missingham was an ideal judge from the artist's point of view - he was both an artist and an art expert, he was in sympathy with their situation, he was unconventional and practical, and he was a strong supporter of contemporary Australian art. He notes that the only time when, in his experience, there was unpleasantness among judges was in relation to the Rubinstein Scholarship in 1961. Robert Hughes, a critic who was one of the judges, was so convinced that Hessing would win that he told him the night before that he had won. To Hughes' embarrassment, the vote was, however, four to one for Gleghorn, and he continued to allege that Missingham had promoted Tom Gleghorn unduly.[12] As far as competitions were concerned, Missingham does not seem to have been unduly partial, since under his judging Gleghorn won only the *Helena Rubinstein Scholarship* in 1961 and the *Geelong Prize* in 1968.

Peter Laverty, Missingham's successor as Director of the AGNSW, often acted as a judge from the late 1960's onwards. Clearly his curatorial expertise would have been important in judging. The fact that he himself had won prizes for painting, and was a member of several committees for the arts and of artists' societies meant that he was well qualified to understand the position of artists in relation to competitions.

Tony Tuckson was another senior member of the staff of the AGNSW who was much involved with art competitions. An Englishman, he

studied art in London, and again, after war service, at East Sydney Technical College. He became Deputy Director soon after joining the staff of the AGNSW in 1950, and remained in that position until his death in 1973. He was therefore a contemporary of Missingham and Laverty and also of Daniel Thomas. He continued to paint although he exhibited very little, and was a convert to abstract expressionism. He was also strongly influenced by Aboriginal art. He kept in touch with what was being exhibited in Sydney commercial galleries,[13] so that he was aware of changing directions in art, as well as being abreast of them in his own work, and in this way, he was well qualified to act as a judge. Between 1963 and 1972 he judged competitions on more than ten occasions, including some major ones such as the *Blake Prize*, the *COMALCO Award*, and the Bathurst and Albury prizes.

Sydney might have been the epicentre of art competitions from the 1960s on, but there were curatorial judges in other centres who made major contributions to the competition scene. One of these was Daniel Thomas, who developed a wide and scholarly knowledge of Australian art as he moved between the AGNSW, where he spent the years between 1958 and 1978, the Venice Biennale of 1978, the Australian section of the NGA between 1978 and 1984, and finally the AGSA, where he was the Director until 1990. He was also a respected art critic and writer, skilled in making difficult contemporary art user-friendly.[14] As Joan Kerr said in reviewing his account of the Joseph Brown collection, Thomas is fascinated by the way the artist's personality is reflected in his art.[15] Between 1963 and 1997, Daniel Thomas acted as a judge at some thirty five assorted art competitions. They included the major Georges and Blake awards, the *Perth Prize for Drawing*, a CAS prize, and local government prizes in NSW and Victoria. He was also a member of the judging panel for the *Visy Board Prize* in South Australia in 1997, and of the pre-selection panel for the *Doug Moran Prize* in 1998. This record speaks for itself as regards the respect felt for him by sponsors and artists.

Two other judges who were much in demand during the early period of art competitions outside Sydney, were Laurie Thomas and Eric Westbrook. Thomas, after a few years as an art critic, became Assistant Director at the NGV, then in 1952 Director of the AGWA (from which he resigned after a row with the Trustees), and in 1961 Director of the QAG. Finally, between 1968 and 1974, he was art editor for the

Australian. As organiser of the 1951 Jubilee Exhibition of Australian Art he met and established rapport with artists all over the country and throughout his career he continued to have direct contact with them, rather than dealing with their work through intermediaries. He had a great respect for contemporary art.[16] He was critical of the giving of prizes to "establishment" art, but praised the diversity of the exhibition of the paintings submitted by invited artists to the *First Leasing Art Prize* of 1970. He drew a sharp distinction between judgement based on good taste, and judgement based on the indefinable element of quality, recognition of which he considered had much to do with knowledge of the great works of all time.[17] Whatever his opinion of art competitions in general may have been, the fact is that during his directorship of the AGWA the *Perth Prize for Contemporary Art* was established by the Gallery to increase interest in contemporary art, and that he was one of the judges. This award was subsequently transformed in turn into the *Perth Prize for Drawing* and the *Perth Prize for Drawing International,* which attracted international artists and judges. He was a judge for more than twenty competitions between the 1950s and 1972.

Eric Westbrook came to Australia from Yorkshire via New Zealand in 1956 to become Director of the NGV, He played a major part in establishing the Regional Galleries system in Victoria and in developing the new Victorian National Gallery building, and later in the management of Arts Victoria, which aimed to create public interest in art.[18] Commenting on his role, he said that he thought of himself not as an artist manqué but as a gallery man, who needed to keep in touch with public reaction to his exhibitions.[19] In a press interview in 1956, after he had refused to hang two entries for the *Crouch Prize* which he believed were obviously insincere attempts to pander to his interest in modern art, he commented that art in Australia had probably reached the stage where artists were painting for competition and not for painting's sake.[20] Nevertheless, in the late 1950s and 1960s he judged some fourteen competitions, some of which were based in Victorian galleries, but including also some major events such as the *COMALCO* and *Alcorso-Sekers* awards, and also the *CAS Annual Interstate Exhibition.*

James Mollison's attitude to judging was not conditioned by extensive personal experience as an artist, although he had done some printmaking early in his career. He began as a teacher and education

officer, and became successively director of a commercial gallery in Melbourne and the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, before becoming associated with the National Collection in Canberra. He was the first Director of the Australian National Gallery in Canberra from 1971 to 1989, and later Director of the NGV. His attitude to art was therefore influenced by the practical and scholarly concerns of assembling collections. In relation to contemporary Australian art he had to attempt to assess which works would become significant over time. This discipline would have helped to equip him to judge acquisitive competitions such as the *Geelong* and *Ballarat* prizes, and more recently the *Alice*, *Clemenger* and *Blundstone* prizes. It is interesting to speculate how it would have applied in his job of preselecting, along with Judy Cassab, the entries for the 1996 *Doug Moran Portrait Prize*.

A few other gallery directors have been chosen relatively frequently as judges. John Baily was a watercolour painter, with a long career as a teacher, critic, and member of the CAS in SA, who became Director of the AGSA and later Principal of the Sydney College of the Arts from 1967-87. Between 1969 and 1990 he judged some ten competitions, including major ones such as *COMALCO*, the two gallery-based Queensland competitions, and the *Bathurst* and *Geelong* Prizes. Robert Campbell, who moved from a curatorial role in the AGWA to the position of Director in the QAG and later the AGSA, judged a similar group of prizes between 1963 and 1968. Ronald Radford was chosen to judge several competitions, including the *Georges Art Award* and the 1997 *Visybord Prize*, while he was Director firstly of the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, and later of the AGSA. Kym Bonython, a commercial gallery owner and publisher, also judged some eight competitions, mainly in NSW and Queensland, between 1963 and 1988.

Other art professionals who acted as judges relatively often between the 1960s and the 1980s included Bernard Smith and Patrick McCaughey. Bernard Smith's career as a teacher, Education Officer in the AGNSW, critic and Professor of Contemporary Art, and his scholarly writings on the history of Australian art had given him a distinguished reputation, although he was a supporter of figurative rather than abstract art. He judged the *Sulman Prize* twice, and the *Mosman* and *Bendigo Prizes*, and was on judging panels for major prizes such as the *Rubinstein Travelling Scholarship*, the *Georges Art Award*, the *Transfield Prize*, and the *Perth Prize for Drawing International*. Patrick McCaughey was a Fellow in Fine

Arts at the University of Melbourne, an art critic, and prolific writer about Australian art, and later became a teaching Fellow and subsequently Professor of Visual Arts at Monash University. He was a formidable critic and a strong champion of modern art. He judged probably a dozen prizes, including the CAS *Taffs Prize* (an indication that he was regarded with favour by that group of contemporary artists), and the *Sulman Prize* (an indication that he was regarded as acceptable by the Trustees of the AGNSW), and he was a member of the panel for the *Georges Award* several times (an indication that he was regarded as right thinking by Alan McCulloch, the long-term organiser of the Award).

The adjudicators who, after Daniel Thomas, seem to have been most in demand, were Alan McCulloch and Elwyn Lynn. McCulloch had some art training in Melbourne but never became a professional artist. He was, however, an art critic in the Melbourne press, and in the 1960s frequently wrote critical articles on art matters for *Meanjin*. His dedication to art was exemplified by his editing of the *Encyclopedia of Australian Art* which was first published in 1964. He was Director of the MPAC from its establishment in 1970 until 1991, just before his death. The formal sources mentioned above show that he judged some thirty art competitions, including some in country towns in Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and NSW, but he himself reputedly claimed to have judged about a hundred. The relatively high numbers of occasions on which he acted as a judge were partly due to the fact that he was always a judge for the *Georges Art Award*, which he administered on behalf of the sponsors throughout its existence from 1963 to 1984. He had an even closer association with the acquisitive prizes for drawing and the print which were based at the MPAC, and in this case, not only was he always a judge, but he selected the other judges.

Elwyn Lynn was a multi-faceted figure whose influence extended in a variety of directions. Originally a teacher, he was a self-taught artist who began painting in the 1940s. In the 1950s he came under the influence of abstract expressionism and also, after a visit to Europe, and to Spain in particular, began to experiment with texture, which remained a feature of his work. As Patrick McCaughey pointed out, his work stood apart from the prevailing stylistic norms. Also in the 1950s he began winning prizes in a variety of competitions, mainly in NSW. He continued to do so intermittently, winning the *Wynne Prize* in 1985

and the *Purchase Prize* of the University of NSW in 1987. He was an enthusiastic and energetic member and later President of the CAS in Sydney, and Editor of its *Broadsheet*, a job in which he became an active contributor rather than merely an assembler. Especially in the 1960s he was active as a critic for the journals *Meanjin* and *Quadrant* and well into the 1980s was a prolific writer about art and artists for *Art and Australia*. He was fully in touch with what was going on in contemporary art in Australia and also overseas. His major achievement was his period as first curator of the Power Bequest of Contemporary Art, which was based in Sydney and later became the MOMA. In this role he was able to keep in touch with current movements in art overseas as well as in Australia. After his retirement he returned to painting and criticism. With this *curriculum vitae* it is hardly surprising that Lynn was a popular judge. He must have officiated as such on almost thirty occasions before his last adjudication at the *Blake Prize* in 1991. This was his second experience as a judge of the Blake, which he himself had won in the 1950s. Many of the prizes which he judged were run by municipal councils in NSW, but he did adjudicate at other more significant competitions such as the *Georges Art Award*, the *COMALCO Award*, and the *Helena Rubinstein Portrait Prize*. Some personal preferences are visible. For example, he awarded the *Robin Hood Prize*, the *Tamworth Prize*, and the *Maitland Prize* in 1964, 1971 and 1977 respectively to Henry Salkauskas (also an abstract expressionist and Tachist painter, as well as a printmaker and watercolourist), and the *Young Contemporaries Prize* in both 1963 and 1968 to John Firth-Smith, a print maker and water-colourist.

Most of the judges mentioned above were either not artists, or were artists who had taken on other roles which gave them special qualifications as judges. A number of artists who spent most of their time working as artists were, however, also in demand as judges. Most began judging in the 1960s and some continued on into the 1980s or even 1990s. The surrealist painter James Gleeson was one of these. He was an exhibitor at the first exhibition of the CAS in Melbourne in 1938.[21] He was an art critic for the Sydney *Sun* and *Sun-Herald* from 1949 to 1972 and wrote for other newspapers and periodicals, including *Meanjin* and *A and A*. He also wrote monographs about artists and art generally. His article on *Painting in Australia since 1945* illustrates his

knowledge and appreciation of Australian artists,[22] and he seems to have been constantly in touch with many of them.

Probably the most popular of the artist judges was Guy Warren, who judged almost thirty competitions between 1963 and 1988, mainly in country towns and Sydney suburbs, and who had won a number of prizes himself. He had trained as a CRTS student at the East Sydney Technical College, and studied in London. He taught at the University of Sydney Art Workshop, and later at the Sydney College of the Arts from 1976-85. It is clear from the transcript of an interview with him that he was a teacher who was deeply involved with his students, but who at the same time expected them to work independently. [23] It is not surprising that he was in demand as a judge.

Lloyd Rees, who was born in 1895 and who judged almost twenty competitions between 1963 and 1985, was a particularly popular judge. He was a widely respected artist and a fine draughtsman who produced romantic landscapes of great dignity and sincerity. His skill and his pleasant and unpretentious personality made him a kind of artistic elder statesman, and he acted as an adviser for several arts bodies, including the National Advisory Committee for UNESCO. As a member of the Blake Society, he was involved with judging the *Blake Prize* four times. He judged the NSW Government Travelling Art Scholarship once, but beyond that was mainly concerned with competitions run by local government bodies.

Another elder statesman was Sir Erik Langker, who was a Trustee of the AGNSW for twenty-seven years, a longstanding member of the RAS, and a member of many other arts bodies. He had been knighted for his services to art. He was a painter of traditional landscapes and still life, but claimed to be tolerant of all styles in art.[24] In spite of the conventional character of his own work, he seems to have been invited to judge at the same type of competitions as other judges mentioned earlier.

John Olsen was from a slightly newer generation. He had studied at the Julian Ashton school and the East Sydney Technical College, and, as a student. was an enthusiastic and imaginative protester against Dargie's eighth Archibald win. His verdict on the *Archibald Prize* was that most professional artists sneer about it and its associated prizes, but that they would love to win them, both for the money and for the

publicity.[25] His "You beaut country" concept, his interest in landscape and the spontaneity of his work stood him in good stead after his return to Australia in 1967, and his success was confirmed when he won a commission for a mural at the new Sydney Opera House in 1970, and some commissions for tapestries. He ran an art school for a short time and taught at the East Sydney Technical College.[26] He entered for and won various prizes, including the *Wynne* in 1969 and 1985, and the *Sulman* in 1989. He offered his own prize, the *Olsen Drawing Prize*, for one year only, and it was won by Mike Parr. He was the close friend of many artists. In 1976 he became a Trustee of the AGNSW and was moved to note what he saw as the arrogance of the curatorial staff and also his own intentions to reform the organisation.[27] One of his earliest judging experiences was as part of the *Blake Prize* panel in 1964 at the age of thirty-six, and he judged a total of about sixteen competitions up to 1991, when he acted as a judge for the Moët & Chandon award.

John Coburn was part of a slightly younger group, and another student of the East Sydney Technical College. His highly stylised forms made him successful in tapestry design, and this in turn probably intensified his tendency to stylisation. He won several prizes for painting, but during much of his career was involved with teaching in technical art institutions. He began judging as early as 1964, as part of the panel for the CAS *Young Contemporaries Prize*. He was a judge for the *Blake Prize*, which he had won twice, and for several local government authority prizes in NSW, as well as for the *Portia Geach Prize* several times, and the *Kedumba Art Prize* in 1990, making a total of about twenty occasions.

John Brack was also part of this generation. He had studied at the NGV School in Melbourne, where he claims to have been largely self-taught. [28] Later he became a teacher, and occasionally a critic, and later still Head of the NGV school. His work is highly intellectual, detached, elegant and precise. He won a few art prizes, although his dazzlingly satirical portrait of Mrs Everage failed to seduce the Trustees who judged the entries for the *Archibald Prize* for 1970, and it seems likely that he did not enter many competitions. Commenting on the *Georges Award* in 1965 he suggested that competitions may do more harm than good, because they inspire artists to paint especially for the competition, and to paint pictures designed primarily to catch the

attention of the judges.[29] On the face of it, he would seem to have been an unlikely person to have been called upon to judge competitions, but the fact is that between 1961 and 1973 he judged at least nine, including two CAS prizes and a *Print Council Prize*, all of which were organised by his fellow artists. Clearly, he had their respect as an artist, and his teaching experience had also given him a breadth of understanding.

John Santry was one of the most popular artist judges, mainly among the NSW local government competitions. He had studied at the Royal Art Society of NSW and at East Sydney Technical College, and went on to teach at the NAS, East Sydney, and at the University of Sydney School of Architecture, and also with the Arts Council in country areas.[30] He was a close friend of Lloyd Rees and Douglas Dundas, also popular judges. His teaching experience probably contributed to his popularity.

One of the few women who acted as a judge fairly often was Nancy Borlase. She began her art training in New Zealand. After coming to Australia she travelled widely, and her work moved towards abstraction and collage. In the 1970 s she became an art critic for the *SMH* and the *Bulletin*, and she finally returned to painting and drawing.[31] She was an active member of the CAS. Between 1964 and 1985 she judged seven or eight competitions, including the *CAS Young Contemporaries*, the *Blake Prize* and the *SMH Art Prize*.

Almost in the next generation of judges was Jan Senbergs. Senbergs had come to Melbourne in 1950 with his migrant parents as a boy. Because of his educational standard he was ineligible for art training and he went through an apprenticeship as a screen printer. He taught himself to paint while working at a variety of unskilled jobs, and developed a highly individualist and independent approach, which he said was largely because he was isolated from other artists, and did not understand their work. He had his first solo exhibition in 1961. He met some of the significant emerging artists, and was influenced more by their attitude to art than by their work. Soon afterwards he began winning prizes, including the *Rubinstein Travelling Scholarship* in 1966, and the *Georges Award* in 1969 and 1982. Rather to his surprise, he became a teacher at the RMIT in 1966. His work, which concentrated on stark but complex images, was widely exhibited in Australia and in

international exhibitions. He had visiting professorships and became a Trustee of the NGV from 1984-89. He seems to have maintained an independent attitude to the art market and to changing styles such as the move to hard edge paintings, which he regarded as art becoming theorised.[32] He seems also to have had a great camaraderie with other artists. His judging activities began in 1979 with the NSW Travelling Scholarship, and he judged at a total of about eight significant competitions up to 1997. It was perhaps his outgoing personality, his independent thought and his reputation as a teacher which made him attractive as an adjudicator.

Some other artists came later to the role of judge. Ken Reinhard was a teacher for over twenty years at tertiary art institutions in Sydney. As an artist he was concerned with Op and Pop art and with abstract sculpture. He won several prizes, including the *Sulman Prize* in 1964, a purchase at Mildura and some Sydney municipal based prizes. He began judging in 1965, and judged a total of ten competitions up to 1989. Wallace Thornton judged ten competitions between 1963 and 1979. Although originally an artist, he was chiefly concerned with teaching at tertiary level, and was a critic. He was a Trustee of the AGNSW from 1971-76.

Gallery directors who were involved in judging later in the period included David Thomas, who was an art historian, and not an artist. He was appointed Director of the Newcastle Art Gallery in 1965 at the age of twenty-seven, and moved on to become Director of the AGSA in 1976, and Director of the Bendigo Art Gallery in 1987. He was much involved with representative bodies such as the Regional Galleries Association of NSW. Between 1970 and 1989 he judged about eight art competitions, mainly in regional Victoria and NSW.

In the 1980s and 1990s gallery directors were still being asked to judge art competitions, but they did not dominate them in terms of numbers as they had done earlier. For example, Edmund Capon, Director of the AGNSW, judged about ten competitions between 1979 and 1999, including the *Le Gay Brereton Prize* for drawing, the *Faber-Castell Drawing Prize* on three occasions, the *Alice Prize* twice, and the *Australian Maritime Art Award*, none of them really major competitions. Barry Pearce, a curator successively at the AGSA, the AGWA and the AGNSW, judged some thirteen competitions between 1980 and 1992,

including the *Blake Prize*, the *Portia Geach Prize*, and the ACTA *Australian Maritime Art Award*. Many well known artists have had little interest in entering or judging art competitions, and there are also a number of senior gallery staff who do not seem to have been involved in judging to any significant extent. These include Directors of regional galleries whose experience would seem to have been very appropriate for the task of judging. Their non-appearance may be partly due to the fact that sponsors like to have big names appearing in their catalogues.

It seems likely that the popularity of the hard core of judges from various backgrounds who functioned repeatedly during the boom years was largely due to their personal qualities - experience, knowledge, enthusiasm for contemporary art, sympathy with artists, friendliness, and generosity with time, which are apparent from the record of their performances. In the course of frequent judging they must have developed approaches to it which would have helped to simplify their task and also to inspire confidence in the sponsors who employed them. They would also have contributed to the development of informal standards.

In the later period judges seem not to have officiated repeatedly to the same extent as they had done in the earlier years. A few representative gallery based judges were Doug Hall, successively Director at the galleries in Warrnambool and Bendigo and the QAG, who judged some six competitions in the 80s and 90s, including the major *Moët & Chandon* and *Clemenger* prizes, Betty Churcher, Director of the NGA, Lou Klepac, Deputy Director of the AGWA, and Leon Paroissien of the MCA, Sydney, all of whom judged several competitions. Curator Hendrick Kolenberg, who was based at the AGNSW, was actively involved with competitions such as the *Kedumba Prize*, and especially those for the print and drawing. Victoria Lynn, also a curator, and daughter of the veteran judge Elwyn Lynn, judged in two major competitions, *Contempora5* and *Moët & Chandon*, during the 1990s.

The community of judges

It is clear that judges have made a major, and highly personal contribution to the success of art competitions. The group of judges which functioned during the 1960s in particular was largely responsible for establishing the credibility of the concept of art competitions in Australia. In order to be able to operate effectively, judges need not

only to have expertise but to be seen to have it. As the brief biographies of popular judges which are given above show, the two most prominent sources of judging expertise have been publicly funded custodial or educational art institutions, and artistic success.

The gallery based judges acquired some kudos from their association with these institutions, especially since by the 1960s all State galleries were employing professional curatorial staff, and were acquiring contemporary Australian art, so that they were becoming centres of practical knowledge and enthusiasm. They operated quite independently of each other. The Australian Gallery Directors' Council, which functioned for some thirty years from the late 1940s, although it might have seemed to be a unifying organisation, was primarily concerned with organising travelling exhibitions from overseas, rather than with developing other areas of co-operation. There was, however, significant cross-fertilisation through staff movements. While several Directors, such as Hal Missingham, Eric Westbrook and Alan McCulloch devoted long careers to a single institution, others moved between institutions. For example, at the level of Director, David Thomas moved successively from Newcastle to Adelaide and Bendigo, Daniel Thomas went from Sydney to Canberra and to Adelaide, and Laurie Thomas went from Melbourne to Perth and to Queensland, and was frustrated at not finally proceeding to Canberra. Robert Campbell moved between Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide, and James Mollison between Ballarat, Canberra and Melbourne. There were no doubt more moves at the level of curator. Within a small profession, these movements would have been stimulating, and they would also have brought a variety of viewpoints to the judging process in each state. Travel by judges to officiate in different locations must have helped to circulate ideas.

In NSW the network of institutions which had its genesis in the East Sydney Technical College was remarkably influential in providing judges for art competitions. Douglas Dundas, John Santry, John Olsen and Wallace Thornton had taught at the College, and John Coburn and Tony Tuckson were students. In 1961 it became the National Art School, which was later divided into the Alexander Mackie College (subsequently the College of Fine Arts at the University of NSW) and the Sydney College of the Arts, where John Baily and Ken Reinhard taught. There was no equivalent central source of judges in Victoria,

but William Dargie, who taught at the National Gallery School, and John Brack, who both trained and taught there, did some judging, as did Sir Joseph Burke, the *Herald* Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne, which was the first Department of Fine Arts at an Australian University.

The availability of judges of acknowledged expertise from this group must have been invaluable to sponsors, and it must also have been useful in establishing informal standards. Once a framework was established, it rested with sponsors to choose judges of a standard which was appropriate to the professional level of artists they hoped to attract. It also made it increasingly possible for them to find judges who would be able to adjudicate in areas of specialisation, or who simply represented new viewpoints.

Artists who acted as judges for major competitions in this period included several prize winners, notably Bea Maddock, a *Clemenger Prize* winner, who judged the *Fremantle Print Prize* and the *Hobart City Council Prize* in the 1990s, Susan Norrie, the first winner of the *Moët & Chandon* award, who was herself a judge in 1989, John Wolseley, the winner of several prizes, and Ann Thompson, whose portrait was hung in the *Archibald Prize* for 1999, and who judged some six prizes in the 1980s and 1990s. Other artist judges included Rosalie Gascoigne, who worked mainly with found material.

Relations of judges with sponsors

Judges act as expert consultants. Having been selected for their expertise, they operate from a position of strength, and there is a convention that their judgements will be accepted. Whether they are paid honorariums, or are merely reimbursed for their expenses, or whether they are unpaid, they are not regarded as employees. They must, of course, accept the conditions of the competition, and they can certainly be chosen to achieve a particular result. For example, Doug Moran's judges always seem to deliver winning portraits of the kind which he wants, and the judges for the first *Contempora5* chose only state of the art installations as finalists from a great variety of entries. At a less sophisticated level, John Santry tells how Erik Langker, having judged the watercolours at the Sydney RAS show, told him that, although his was the best watercolour, he could not award him the

prize because it was not a landscape, and the authorities expected a landscape, even though the rules did not require it.[33]

There are no objective rules to be applied in judging art competitions. Although it may appear to have much in common with others, each competition operates in its own context of sponsorship, location, time and competitors. The fact that standards have to be developed in this context is a challenge to the ingenuity and understanding of the judges concerned. Elwyn Lynn, the busiest of the judges mentioned earlier, describes how, on circuit in one year, he judged sculpture in Melbourne, and paintings at suburban Rockdale, at Toowoomba and at Tamworth. Rather than being able to take the first plane out after doing so, he was required to discuss his decisions publicly.[34]

Judges of art competitions in Australia have rarely stated their philosophy. Ruth Croft-Firman, writing in the *Australian Artist* in 1990 refers to an International Standard for judging used by the Royal Academy which recognises more than 423 categories of art, and asks whether this should be used in Australia.[35] It has not been possible to trace this standard. One response to Croft-Firman's question appears, however, to be that defining categories would not seem to help greatly in assessing the relative merit of works within either the same or different categories. She refers also to the criteria for judging specified by an American judge, Virginia Cobb - technique, design and content. Other criteria were enunciated by Alan Fern, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, who was one of the judges for the *Moran Prize* in 1988. Fern spoke of a general sense of eloquence (the direct expression of the artist's intentions), of technical excellence, and of originality.[36]

Peter Timms, a curator and writer, commenting in his capacity as a judge in the 1994 *Moët & Chandon* competition, said that the works which were selected looked good, were well crafted, and, at the same time, were concerned to communicate visually. He pointed out that judges have to make decisions solely on the basis of the evidence which they see before them, and that this is not a bad thing, because it is also what the public has to do most of the time. He also remarked that the visual arts are becoming less and less concerned with the visual - a reference to the move away from canvas, and the variety of media and intentions which as a result have increasingly confronted competition judges in the 1980s and 1990s.[37]

In a sense, the process of selecting a winner is the reverse of the normal curatorial process - at least in the early stages it is concerned with rejection rather than selection. It seems likely, however, that the curatorial impulse is more influential in the later stages of judging, when the idea of creating a representative, interesting and practical exhibition becomes important.

There are arguments for and against the use of single judges as compared with panels. A single judge may have a limited view, but has to accept full responsibility for his/her decisions. A panel of judges could be expected to provide a more balanced judgement, but is always subject to hazards, such as the influence of long serving judges (for example, Alan McCulloch in the *Georges Award)*, of persuasive speakers (for example, Patrick McCaughey), of religious conviction (for example, Father Michael Scott), of seniority among equals (for example, in panels of gallery directors), and of the few against the many (for example, the artists among the AGNSW Trustees). There is always the possibility of a compromise which has no real credibility. A panel of judges can have the benefit of protecting individual judges against criticism, an outcome which supports Peter Timms' suggestion that all entries in the *Moët & Chandon* award should be shown from time to time to keep the judges accountable.[38] The performance of the Trustees of the AGNSW as judges is an extreme case. It has been described as democracy in action, which is true in the sense that the Board's decisions are reached by voting, but these decisions are virtually meaningless because the group which makes them has no real raison d'etre in relation to the competition.

The Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, in its suggested conditions for organisers of art competitions, proposed that organisers of art exhibitions should, before nominating judges, request advice from the leading art societies or from the National Galleries as to the persons who would best serve their purpose. It also proposed that they might be obtained in turn from the various leading art societies throughout the Commonwealth. It suggested that a single adjudicator is better than a panel, provided the adjudicator is changed from year to year, and that, when there is a panel of judges, at least a majority should be practising artists. It also suggested that the names

of the adjudicators should be made known when the competition is announced[39]

Relations of judges with artists

The decisions of judges are, of course, crucial for artists. To win a prize and the associated publicity is their fundamental aim, but even to be hung in the exhibition is highly desirable. The status of the judge or judges is important in establishing the status of the award, and in turn reflects on the competitors. NAVA, in the first issue of its publication *Money for Visual Artists*, which circulated information about future competitions, reminded prospective entrants that the kind of event which a competition was (for example an art prize, a purchase exhibition or a community festival) might determine how and/or at what level it was organised. It advised them to find out who was on the jury before submitting work to a competition, and to be provided with a contract or letter setting out conditions.[40] This presumably reflected concern with standards of competitions, but it could also have included a suggestion to intending competitors that they inform themselves about the taste and interests of potential judges. It is significant that it also reflects the suggestion of the Australian Advisory Committee for UNESCO that the names of the adjudicators or the panel of adjudicators should be made known when the competition is announced.

Artists, and especially the CAS, have on occasions publicly criticised the results of judging, although not so much the selection of the judges themselves. This criticism is distinct from the face-to-face argument with a judge which might be initiated by contestants who want to know why their work was unsuccessful as against that of others. In 1974 a criticism of judges and judging was published in the *Broadsheet* of the NSW CAS. The author, Karen Bensley, a curator, made the point that because there are no rules for art competitions there are no real grounds for comparison of entries, so that choices are made on a subjective basis. She suggested three remedies. The first was that judges should publish manifestos of their views, so that competitors could read them and avoid competitions whose judges were likely to be unsympathetic. The second was that judges should provide reports on all entries to a representative committee which would make the awards. The third was that, rather than holding a competition, sponsors should appoint buyers to make purchases in place of acquisitive awards.[41]

The last of these suggestions is reflected in the purchase awards which are now quite common. The other two do not seem to be practical, and they have apparently not been followed up, but they are an interesting illustration of some of the difficulties perceived by artists.

ENDNOTES

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39 Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO, Circular, 'Suggested conditions offered as a Guide to Organisers of Competitive Art Exhibitions', nd, c 1956.

40 *Money for Visual Artists*, NAVA, Sydney, p. 7.

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CHAPTER 7

ARTISTS AND COMPETITIONS: SOME PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION

In art competitions the sponsors are the entrepreneurs who organise each event, and the judges are their expert consultants. Artists provide the rationale for holding the competition, and are usually represented as potential beneficiaries from it. Their participation is, however, always voluntary, even if a decision to enter a competition is simply a matter of accepting an invitation to do so. It is also unpredictable. There are two major areas of uncertainty in this situation. The first, which concerns the sponsors, is that they have no guarantee that enough suitable competitors will enter to justify holding the competition, unless, of course, they themselves have selected them beforehand. The second, which concerns the artists, is that the basis for judgement is not usually defined, and that the other competitors are not known in advance, so that they cannot anticipate the nature of the competition which they face.

Clearly, the attitudes of artists themselves to competitions, and their patterns of entering them are important in any understanding of the art competition process. Artists, however, do not often comment explicitly on philosophical aspects of competition in art. Their published comments are often made when they disagree with judges' decisions, as they have done in relation to the *Archibald Prize*, or when they are in the euphoric state of having just won or lost a competition, a situation in which they may be encouraged to mention practical matters such as how they are going to use the money, or the skills of the judges, rather than the desirability of competition itself. The fact that biographies and autobiographies of artists seldom pay much attention to their experiences in competitions indicates their attitude to them, although they usually provide a list of awards won, and of exhibitions in which the artist was represented. Similarly, the interviews with artists which have been recorded by the NLA rarely include reference to competitions, perhaps because the direction of the interview is mainly controlled by the interviewer who, like the artist, is chiefly interested in discussing the actual work of the artist. There are some exceptions. For example, Betty Churcher's biography of Jon Molvig describes his continuing attempts to win the *Archibald* and other prizes, but does so largely

because they had an important influence on his work.[1] Judy Cassab's published diaries record both her wins and her losses with candid emotion.[2] There is a dramatic account of the effects of competition in McQueen's *Suburbs of the Sacred*, which includes accounts of Keith Looby's determined efforts over a long period to win several major prizes.[3]

In the final analysis, the most practical demonstration of the attitude of artists to art competitions is the extent to which they have taken part in them, and it is clear that in general enough artists have continued to enter them to justify their continuance. There are certainly situations where a recurring competition has ended, not because of a change in the circumstances of the sponsors, but because the quality of the entries seemed to be falling off, suggesting decreasing participation by the better qualified artists. For example, in Melbourne, Georges decided in 1984 to cancel the competition which it had sponsored for about twenty years on the grounds that the prize money was not sufficient to attract artists of appropriate standing, and that it could not justify more expenditure.[4] The *Transfield Prize* ended in 1971 because of the sponsor's perception that art in Australia needed a new stimulus.[5] The *Moët & Chandon Art Award* changed dramatically in 1999, perhaps because of its cost to the sponsor, but perhaps also because of difficulties in maintaining direction with increasingly diverse entries.[6]

Statistical review

Unfortunately, it is not possible to assess the attitude of artists to competitions on the basis of a comprehensive review of the extent to which artists have entered them. Reasons for this difficulty include the range and distribution of competitions, and their varying life spans, and the fact that artists who were hung may be recorded, but those who were not hung rarely are. An exception is the *Fifth National Indigenous Heritage Art Award* in 2000, the Catalogue for which includes some information about all of the 400 submissions which were received, with illustrations of the work of most of the artists.[7] The one reasonably consistent source of assembled information is the data relating to art competitions which was published by *Art and Australia* for thirty years between May 1963 and Winter 1993, and which lists forthcoming competitions and the results of competitions.[8] Both are

incomplete. They do not cover the whole range of competitions, and in any case they are based on information supplied to the Editor by competition organisers, and this may not necessarily be sent in every time each competition is held. The most useful information which can be extracted from this source is the names of the winners, because it identifies one artist in relation to each competition which was held, and, of course, which was reported to *Art and Australia*.

Using this source I have noted firstly the artists who won the major prize for each of the competitions for oil painting which is listed, and secondly those for other media, in the case of competitions for special formats such as sculpture, water-colour and prints. This exercise made it possible to create an index showing the competitions won by each artist over time, but it is far from being a comprehensive record. For example, it usually excludes watercolour prizes in competitions in which these were subsidiary to those for oils, and it is somewhat skewed by the fact that a few entries have been added from McCulloch's *Encyclopedia of Australian Art* for competitions which were held before *Art and Australia* began recording results and after it ceased to do so, and also for some artists who entered a number of regional competitions. Even so, it gives a good indication of the numbers of competitions which were actually staged, and it also records the performance of a number of artists who won prizes over the years. Its most tantalising, but inevitable, deficiency is that it does not record the artists who entered competitions often, or intermittently, or on only one occasion, but did not win. Nevertheless, the limited information which it provides gives some indication of the ways in which artists have interacted with competitions.

This survey includes the purchase awards which became increasingly popular in the 1970s and 1980s, and treats them as wins in competitions. The principle behind these awards was that one or more competitors were selected to win the award, and that the work of art concerned was then purchased by the sponsor.

The Table on Page 254 presents the basic data from this survey. It shows the total numbers of prize-winners in each state by decades, amounting to a total of 4,590 prize-winners. There are some clear profiles. The total numbers rose quickly from the 1950s to peak in the 1970s, and declined somewhat in the 1980s. There are signs of an

WINNING ARTISTS

S = Once Only M = Multiple Wins T = Total

	40s			50s			60s			70s			80s			90s			
	S	M	T	S	M	T	S	M	T	S	M	T	S	M	T	S	M	T	
NSW	3	28	31	2	145	147	9	632	722	130	535	665	223	406	629	75	117	192	2386
VIC	5	27	32	3	62	65	14	173	187	71	328	399	69	195	264	29	45	75	1022
QLD	1	2	3	1	13	14	13	99	112	60	206	266	96	168	264	29	30	59	718
WA	-	4	4	-	19	19	4	36	40	26	35	61	6	49	55	6	5	11	190
SA	-	1	1	1	16	17	-	25	25	-	15	15	27	28	55	2	1	3	116
TAS	-	-	-	2	2	4	4	17	21	5	13	18	11	9	20	8	4	12	75
ACT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	6	8	2	9	11	2	-	2	22
NT	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	1	6	21	27	14	16	30	1	2	3	62
	9	102	71	10	267	267	45	983	1109	300	1159	1459	448	880	1328	152	205	357	

S = 1,045
M = 3,546
T = 4,591

increase in the 1990s on the basis of the three years which are covered relatively adequately. The numbers peaked most dramatically in NSW, which has always been pre-eminent as regards art competitions, and the numbers in Queensland run quite close to those in Victoria. The figures make it clear that there are many artists who have had one win only, and a much smaller number who succeeded in winning several times. Figures for these two groups have been recorded separately. They show 1,045 once-only winners, as against 763 repeated winners who achieved an average of about 4.6 wins each. Clearly, some artists entered a number of competitions in order to achieve so many wins. The average number of wins for both groups combined, that is for all winners, was 2.5.

An interesting factor is the period of time during which individual artists continued to enter competitions. Some, for example, seem to have tried their luck at intervals throughout their careers, while some indulged in a burst of entries, usually at the time when they were in the early stages of becoming known. The average period over which winners of several prizes entered competitions was just under eleven years, which clearly indicates a significant number of winners who continued to enter competitions over long periods, although not necessarily often. Examples of these are Jean Bellette, who won about twenty-three prizes between 1942 and 1965, Ernest Buckmaster, who won the *Archibald* in 1932 and the *Albury Prize* in 1963, and Noel Counihan who won an *Australia at War Prize* in 1945, and whose last win was a *Mornington Peninsula Arts Centre Purchase* in 1979. Each of these artists won other prizes in the intervening years. Elwyn Lynn won about twenty prizes between 1963 and 1997, and Margaret Olley won some ten prizes between 1947 and 1986. Hans Heysen seems to hold the record for persistence, having won his first *Wynne Prize* in 1904 and the *Vizard-Wholohan Prize* in 1957.

The statistics show that about 14% of prizes were won in States other than the home state of the artist concerned, indicating that artists were aware of competitions which were available elsewhere and were willing to make the effort of sending their work. The reason presumably was that they were keen to win prizes, and that in some cases they might have felt that they had a better chance in a new environment. This practice would have had the benefit of diversifying exhibitions in the States which received entries other than local ones, although, on

the other hand, local artists might not have welcomed additional competition.

The difference in performance between men and women justifies looking separately at the statistics for women. They won a total of about 1,160 prizes over the period as against the total of 4,590 prizes won, which means that they scored just over one quarter of the total wins (See Table on Page 257 attached). They do not appear often in the results of the major prizes - for example, the *Archibald Prize* was won only three times by a woman during its first sixty years and women have been even more sparsely represented in the *Wynne Prize*. The *Australian Women's Weekly* provided a prize for women in addition to the *Open Prize*, which was always won by a man. The record of the *Blake Prize* was little better until comparatively recently. Of the eleven awards of the *Transfield Prize*, only one was to a woman, and that was to Norma Redpath, who was already a recognised figure in the specialised field of sculpture. Some of the purchase competitions seem to have been kinder to women, perhaps because there were relatively more chances of winning and they were therefore more inclined to enter them. The *Moët & Chandon Fellowship*, and other more recently established competitions, have been relatively much more rewarding for women.

It has to be emphasised that these figures are only notional, because they are not based on comprehensive data. It is tempting to try to estimate the elusive figure of the total number of artists who have entered art competitions. Some of the major competitions such as the *Archibald Prize* could have something like 600 entries, although numbers have fluctuated, while those with invited entrants might have thirty or less. The Survey of Selected Competitions which I conducted in 1997 asked each respondent for the total number of entries in their competition in the previous year, or in the last year of the competition. An approximate average of those comes to about 280. This is a problematical figure which, although it relates to a variety of competitions, is not really representative. *Money for Visual Artists* lists some 230 competitions to be held in Australia in that year.[9] Together these two figures provide a total of something like 64,000 possible entrants in art competitions in Australia during that year. This figure seems astronomical, and it certainly does not take account of the fact that some artists might enter more than one competition. It does, however, give some idea of the large numbers of people who would have

NUMBERS OF WOMEN ARTISTS WHO WON COMPETITIONS

S = Once Only M = Multiple Wins T = Total

	40s			50s			60s			70s			80s			90s			
	S	M	T	S	M	T	S	M	T	S	M	T	S	M	T	S	M	T	
NSW	3	4	7	-	26	26	18	97	115	70	116	186	97	140	237	34	47	81	652
VIC	1	4	5	2	7	9	2	20	22	30	42	72	31	48	79	17	15	32	219
QLD	-	1	1	-	4	4	1	11	12	18	25	43	43	57	100	9	8	17	117
WA	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	3	3	10	5	15	3	10	13	2	1	3	36
SA	-	-	-	2	2	4	-	4	4	-	2	2	15	2	17	1	-	1	28
TAS	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	2	-	2	2	2	4	6	3	3	6	17
ACT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	-	1	1	-	-	4	4	-	-	-	5
NT	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	4	3	7	11	6	17	1	1	2	27
	4	9	13	5	41	46	22	137	158	132	196	328	202	271	473	67	75	142	

S = 432
M = 729
T = 1,161

taken part in competitions over the years. To consider it in relation to the total numbers of artists working in Australia is also problematical, partly because a large number of the entrants would not have been professional artists. An economic study of Australian artists which was prepared for the Australia Council in 1994 showed that there were 7,500 visual artists working in Australia in 1993, but the authors noted that, for a variety of reasons, it is difficult to arrive at a figure of this kind, and it therefore does not really offer a useful comparison.[10]

These statistics provide an idea of the extent of participation by artists in competitions, although admittedly a nebulous one. Information about participation by individual artists is available from *The Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, edited by Alan and Susan McCulloch. The status which is conferred by winning prizes is indicated by the fact that artists have been chosen for inclusion in the *Encyclopedia* if their work is represented by purchase in a national, State or regional gallery or if they have won a major prize.[11] A check of the entries for artists who would apparently have been eligible to win competitions during the 20th century shows that approximately 80% of them had won awards - a high proportion. The *Encyclopedia* lists in the entry for each artist the significant awards which they have won, and in some cases notes the competition exhibitions in which their work has been hung. It also lists the winners in relation to most of the entries in its section on 'Prizes, Awards and Scholarships'. Understandably it gives no indication of the numbers of artists who entered. Other encyclopedic publications such as Germaine's *Dictionary of Women Artists*[12] and the *Concise Dictionary of Australian Artists* edited by R. Smith[13] also list the awards won by each artist.

It seems reasonable to assume that the prizes which individual artists have won to some extent indicate their pattern of entering competitions, and therefore indirectly reflect their attitude to competitions. These patterns vary greatly. For example, some artists have entered them, perhaps intermittently, over much of their career, others have continued to enter them over a period of up to twenty years or so, and some have entered several within a short period. Some have entered only rarely, or not at all. Those artists who have often been successful have presumably entered more consistently than those who

were not. They may also have developed some skill in selecting competitions which are appropriate for them, and in entering appropriate works.

Participation by artists

These statistics are useful in presenting a general picture, but they give no idea of the individuals involved. As a way of identifying the kinds of artists who have entered competitions, and the way in which they did so in relation to their artistic careers, I will briefly review the results of some representative artists, again in terms of those who have won competitions. There were not many artists who won competitions frequently during the first phase of competitions, up to the end of the 1940s, simply because few competitions were being offered. Those who did win a number of prizes were often beneficiaries of the practice of the Trustees of the AGNSW, which extended into the second phase of competitions, up to the end of the 1970s, of making repeated awards to particular artists. The *Wynne Prize*, for example, was notable for recurring awards to W. Lister Lister, Elioth Gruner, and Hans Heysen. Heysen won his first *Wynne Prize* in 1904 and his ninth and last in 1931. His reputation for landscape painting was established by these successes, and he won only two other prizes, the *Crouch Prize* in 1931, and the Adelaide based *Maud Vizard-Wholohan Prize* for landscape in 1957. Similarly, the successes of artists such as W. B. McInnes, John Longstaff and William Dargie, who won total numbers of eight, five and ten prizes respectively, were almost all in the *Archibald Prize*, and these successes greatly reinforced their careers. Ernest Buckmaster supplied a sidelight on the McInnes/Longstaff monopoly. He was a regular competitor in the *Archibald Prize*, but, although he was consistently unsuccessful, he rejected an offer by one of his sitters to suggest to Longstaff that he retire to give young painters a chance, his reason being that if he won, he wanted to do so by beating Longstaff. He succeeded in this in 1932 with a portrait of Sir William Irvine, the Lieutenant Governor, which he said brought him some commissions.[14]

The number, range and generosity of the prizes which increasingly became available during the second phase of competitions, beginning with the 1950s, seems to have attracted many artists to enter a variety of competitions. Some won a number of prizes. One of these was the respected landscape painter Lloyd Rees, who won a total of fifteen prizes, beginning with the *Godfrey Rivers Prize* in 1941, and the *Dunlop*

Prize in 1954. He went on to win prizes in each decade from the 1940s to the 1980s, including the *Wynne Prize* in 1950 and again in 1982, prizes at the Royal Easter Show in the 1950s, prizes in country galleries and the *McCaughey Prize* in Sydney. His prize-winning career ended with the invitation *Jack Manton Prize* in 1987.

Two other artists who succeeded in winning a number of prizes, and began to do so in the first phase, were Charles Bush and Eric Smith. Bush, a gallery owner and critic, began by winning several prizes in regional galleries in Victoria in the 1940s, and in 1947 won the first *Perth Prize* and the first *Albury Prize*. In the 1950s he won the *Wynne Prize* twice. The other major award among his total of over thirty prizes was the *Australian Maritime Art Award* of $20,00 in 1987. In 1965 he commented that he felt that a professional artist should always accept public commissions, with the intention of raising taste.[15] Smith began winning prizes at the *Australia at War* exhibition in 1945, and his total of twenty-three prizes included seven *Blake Prizes*, the first in the 1950s. In the 1960s he won the *Helena Rubinstein Scholarship*. He found that the *Blake Prize* offered him a stimulus, and also an opportunity to exhibit his paintings with others who were trying to say something about religion.[16] He won the *Archibald Prize* three times between 1970 and 1982, and also the *Wynne* and *Sulman Prizes*, as well as being represented in a number of group exhibitions. The variety of their wins suggests that both these painters had a strong competitive instinct.

In the 1950s a newer generation of artists began winning competitions. Brett Whiteley had won the *Bathurst Prize* for young artists in 1956, before acquiring an Italian travelling scholarship which took him to Europe, Asia and the USA. After his return to Australia in 1961 he won the *John McCaughey Prize* three times, and the *Sir William Angliss Memorial Prize*, but his *tour de force* was winning both the *Archibald* and the *Sulman Prize* for 1976 and 1978, and the *Wynne Prize* for 1977 and 1978, followed by a *Gold Coast Purchase Award*, all in the context of a highly successful, although tragically short, career. Elwyn Lynn has been mentioned earlier as judge, critic and editor. He was also Curator of the Power Bequest Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney from 1969 to 1983. Fundamentally, however, from the 1940s onwards he was a painter, and in that role he won over twenty competitions. The earliest were the *Blake*, *Mosman* and *Bathurst* Prizes in the 1950s, but

until the 1980s he continued to win prizes, often in country towns in at least four states.

Fred Williams began entering art competitions consistently and successfully in the 1960s, when he was on the threshold of recognition. He had won a prize in the *Dunlop* competitions in Melbourne in 1950. In several competitions his participation was by invitation, or some other form of pre-selection. For example, he was invited to apply for the *Helena Rubinstein Travelling Scholarship* in 1960, but did not actually win it until 1963. In the meantime he had acquired new responsibilities through marriage, and had achieved some recognition through the acquisition of his work by major State galleries. In 1963, he came second in the *Georges Invitation Art Award*, and began painting full-time, with the support of Rudy Komon. In the following year he travelled in Europe, and he also won the *Robin Hood*, *Muswellbrook* and *Transfield Prizes*. In 1966 he won the *Georges Award* and the *Wynne Prize* (which he won again in 1976), and the *McCaughey Prize*, an award based on his painting in the AGNSW, and for which he did not have to enter. His last prize before his death in 1982 was a third *McCaughey Prize* in Sydney in 1981. It is noteworthy also that the *Transfield* Prize and the second *Georges* award marked the beginning of new themes in his work - the You Yangs and Upwey respectively. Clearly, at this stage in his career, the commendations provided by these prizes were valuable, as well as the prize itself.

Guy Warren has to be mentioned in this group of prolific prize-winners. He was an enthusiastic entrant, with a total of more than twenty prizes. His first winnings made it possible for him to marry and to travel overseas, and in the 1960s he won a number of Sydney suburban and NSW country competitions, and also the *Perth Prize*. The *Flotto Lauro Prize* and a Dyason grant funded more overseas travel, and, back in Australia, he proceeded to win more prestigious prizes such as the *Georges* and the *Darnell de Gruchy Prizes*, and in the 1980s the *Wynne*, the *Archibald* and the *Trustees' Watercolour Prize*. Entry in these competitions provided good exhibition opportunities in addition to his annual programs of solo and group exhibitions in several States and overseas. At the same time, he was actively engaged with judging, particularly in NSW municipal competitions. Tom Gleghorn was also an enthusiastic entrant, with at least fifteen awards, plus an additional number estimated by McCulloch as being over twenty-five. He was

encouraged to enter competitions after a successful exhibition with Bob Dickerson and John Coburn, and, as he told an interviewer, he seemed to do fairly well. Benefits which he saw were that they provided him with economic values, and the cash allowed him to spend much more money on paint than would otherwise have been possible. They also provided a goal to be met, and a measuring stick for his own paintings. He seems to have entered a number of competitions during the 1960s, but subsequently to have concentrated on solo and group exhibitions, although he had a win at the *Cossack Art Awards* in 2000.[17]

Bea Maddock, a distinguished artist and academic, has had over thirty solo exhibitions, and has been represented in international print exhibitions, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. She has had several important commissions. At the same time, she has actively participated in art competitions, winning at least fifteen prizes for prints and drawings. These were often based on purchase (such as the *Muswellbrook Art Prize* and the *Henri Worland Print Award*), or invitation (such as the *AMCOR Paper Awards* and the *Clemenger Prize*), and included at least one overseas prize. She valued the *Clemenger Prize* in particular, not only for the prestige which it brought, but because the money made it possible for her to undertake a major new project. Another printmaker and teacher who has won a number of prizes is Bob Grieve, who won some twenty prizes in four States between the 1960s and 1980s, several of them purchases in regional galleries.

Some migrant painters seem to have found that competitions were a useful way of becoming known. Judy Cassab, for example, had launched her career with a programme of solo exhibitions soon after reaching Australia from Prague in 1951. She was active in entering competitions, and began a series of about eighteen wins with the *Perth Prize* and the *Australian Women's Weekly Prize* in 1955. In 1961 she became only the second woman to win the *Archibald Prize*, and she won it again in 1968. She continued to enter competitions, including the *Helena Rubinstein Portrait* and the *RAS Portrait Prizes*, and in 1998 won the *Pring Prize*. She had a successful career as a portrait painter, and took part in a number of exhibitions, but she retained a strong urge to compete and win.[18] Another migrant painter who began winning a number of competitions from the 1950s onwards was Maximillian Feurring, a Polish migrant with a teaching background, who was a foundation member of the CAS. He was not able to get a teaching

position in Australia, a fact which may have made him all the more determined to achieve recognition, and between about 1958 and 1970 he won some sixteen awards, including the *Bathurst Prize*, and the invitation *Transfield Prize.*[19] Henry Salkauskas, a Lithuanian, also found that he could not make a living from selling his art, and turned to competitions. He won well over twenty from the early 1960s to the end of the 1970s, including the Perth, Muswellbrook and Geelong prizes, and a number of competitions in Sydney suburbs and NSW towns.

Another Lithuanian migrant, Eva Kubbos arrived in Australia in 1952, after studying in Germany. She studied in Australia also, had her first solo show in 1961, and won the *Wynne Prize* in 1963 and 1971. Her work was included in a number of Australian and international exhibitions, but winning prizes seems to have provided a special stimulus for her, and between 1974 and 1989 she won some twenty-three, mainly in NSW suburban shows.[20]

Jan Senbergs, a migrant from Latvia, came to Australia in 1950 at the age of eleven, and was largely self taught, although he attended Richmond Technical School, and went to the Melbourne School of Printing and Graphic Arts as part of an apprenticeship. Leonard French befriended him, and introduced him to the idea of being an artist, as distinct from merely using artistic techniques. He began entering competitions in the 1960s, and said that it was a great boost to his morale when he was invited to compete for the *Rubinstein Travelling Scholarship* in 1963, and the *Georges Invitation Art Award* in the following year, and in particular when he was given the commendation prize for the latter. He won the *Rubinstein Scholarship* for 1966, and in 1969 he won the *Newcastle Art Gallery Prize.* Although he told an interviewer, Barbara Blackman, that he was never over-excited by winning prizes or selling a painting,[21] he continued in the 1970s and early 1980s to enter and win a variety of other competitions such as the prizes for drawing offered by the Fremantle and Mornington Peninsula Art Centres, the *Tasmanian Print Prize*, and the *QAG Trustees Purchase*, and finally the *Kedumba Drawing Prize* in 1991. At the same time he was pursuing an active career in which he had solo exhibitions, and his work was included in survey exhibitions in Australia and overseas. He taught at the RMIT and overseas, and carried out some important commissions, and was also exhibited by Rudy Komon.

Greg Daly is a ceramicist and teacher who is recorded in McCulloch as having won some thirty awards in Australia and in France, Yugoslavia and Poland between the 1970s and the 1990s, including the *Caltex Ceramic Award* and the *Fisher's Ghost Ceramic Purchase* in the 1980s.

These artists represent relatively frequent competitors, but there is another group who seem to have been virtually professional competitors. Between the 1950s and 1980s, for example, Jean Isherwood, a traditional painter and printmaker, is reputed to have won over seventy first prizes, including several purchase awards, mainly those offered by local government bodies in regional NSW.[22] Her daughter, Jacqueline Dabron, an Expressionist landscape painter, won some twenty-eight prizes from the 1970s onwards. Both were involved with careers in teaching and exhibiting. Patrick Carroll also exhibited in a number of group exhibitions, including those for the *Blake* and *Wynne* prizes. He won an ACTA award, and over 100 awards between 1965 and 1992 in Sydney and NSW country districts, including some at agricultural shows.[22a] Suzanne Archer, who came to Australia from England in 1965, studied in Paris and New York in the 1970s, and during the 1980s held a number of exhibitions in Sydney and Melbourne. She found, however, that winning an art prize was a great confidence booster, and by the 1990s had won about forty prizes. Many of them were in regional centres, but they included the *Georges*, *Gold Coast* and *Alice* purchase awards, the *Pring Prize*, the *Trustees' Watercolour Prize*, the *Wynne Prize* and the *Faber-Castell Prize for Drawing*. She clearly had no difficulty in integrating work for competitions with work for exhibitions, and she was unmoved by the comment of friends that she was a compulsive prize-winner.[23]

The artists discussed above have in common the fact that they have successfully made use of art competitions, and have continued to do so on a number of occasions. There are, of course, many more artists who have won fewer competitions. I will review the experience of some of them, with the idea of considering what the benefit of entering competitions has been for them. The first of these chronologically, and also appropriately in terms of his part in the history of art competitions, is William Dobell. In 1929 he had won the third prize of one hundred guineas in the *Australian Art Quest* at the State Theatre in Sydney, and in the same year he also won the *Society of Artists'*

Travelling Art Scholarship. In London he studied at the Slade School, and in 1930 won prizes for figure painting and draughtsmanship.[24] He returned to Australia in 1939, and soon after the outbreak of war began work associated with the war - in a camouflage unit, in the Civil Construction Corps and finally as a war artist. He began a series of portraits, and entered two of them in the *Archibald Prize* for 1943. As Gleeson points out, the portrait presents a conflict between creating the likeness of an individual in a physical and in a psychological sense. In the context of the time, compromise between these two aims was almost impossible, but the portrait with which won Dobell the *Archibald Prize* was both a great painting and great portrait.[25] The controversy and litigation which followed the win, and the effects of these on Dobell have been described in more detail in Appendix 2. In 1944 he was appointed a Trustee of the AGNSW, but during his three years in this position he managed to evade becoming involved in the task of judging entries for the *Archibald Prize.*[26] He entered paintings for the *Archibald Prize* and the *Wynne Prize* for 1948, and won both.

In 1949, after the announcement of these wins, he told a press representative that, in his view, the Prize had done nothing for art, but was a deterrent. He went on to say:

> *It has developed a false emphasis on effort. and brought out the competitive spirit, which is not conducive to art. I feel it has done a lot of harm by destroying the co-operative spirit of artists. This friendly spirit is essential in the production of fine works. The £500 prize-money is too big. It has fostered ill feeling. The Award should not be confined to portraits. Portraits are outmoded. The word portrait suggests something hanging in town halls and council chambers. If the competition were on broader lines, covering art, it would be more desirable.*[27]

This was a provocative statement coming from an artist who had just had his reputation reaffirmed by winning the *Archibald Prize* for the second time. It may have been in part a response to a criticism of Dobell's portrait by Joseph Wolinski which was mentioned in the same press report. Wolinski was one of the artists who had contested his win in 1943, and his comment no doubt evoked memories of the painful controversy of 1944. A few days later Dobell qualified it by another comment, making it clear that he did not intend to slight Archibald, but that he was:

> *stating a general principle that big prize money does not bring forth the best in art... a principle that applies in all big*

competitions in the field of art. I would not say such competitions do great harm, but I do not think they stimulate the artist to do his best.[28]

The second statement reflects some doubt about the role of art competitions as a way of establishing standards and providing a forum in which artists can confidently display their work. It presumably implies that artists may be tempted to modify their work in the hope of pleasing the judges.

Significantly, Dobell's reservations did not cause him to abandon entering art competitions. He went on the win the *Australian Women's Weekly Portrait Prize* of £1,500 in 1957, and a third *Archibald Prize* in 1959. In this context, it is not inappropriate that the Trustees of the Dobell Foundation used it to establish a prize, the *Dobell Prize for Drawing*, which was first awarded in 1993.

Other artists who began winning a modest number of prizes in the first phase of competitions were Noel Counihan and Margaret Olley. Counihan won his first prize at the *Australia at War Exhibition* in 1945, and later won the *Albury Prize*, the *McCaughey Prize* in Melbourne, and some prizes in Victorian regional galleries. His major win was the *Georges Award* in 1971. Margaret Olley won a total of ten prizes between 1947 and 1986, beginning with the *Mosman Prize* in 1947, and including the *Helena Rubinstein Portrait Prize* in 1963, and some prizes in Queensland, Victoria and NSW.

A number of artists seem to have won several competitions over fairly short periods during the 1950s and 1960s, a result which presumably reflects the pattern of their entries. For the early Modernist painter Grace Cossington Smith, for example, competitions opened up a new field of interest. Although she did not depend on painting for an income, she was concerned with recognition and sales. When she was sixty and had been painting for almost forty years, she entered and won the newly established *Mosman Prize* in 1952. The *Blake Prize*, also new, stimulated her interest in religious art, and, although her first entry was rejected, one of her paintings was accepted in 1953.[29] She went on to win the *Bathurst Prize* in 1958 and 1960. Her friend Jean Appleton followed her example, winning the *Rockdale Prize* in 1958, the *D'Arcy Morris Memorial Prize* for religious art in 1960, and the *Portia Geach Prize* in 1965, as well as some regional prizes. Norma Redpath won the

Baillieu Library Prize in Melbourne in 1958, the *Mildura Prize* for sculpture in 1961 and 1964, and the *Transfield Prize* for sculpture in 1966. By then she was receiving major commissions, and to continue competing for the few available prizes for sculpture was presumably no longer attractive.

For some artists, winning art prizes early in their career was a useful way of becoming known. Leonard French, won some prizes over a relatively short period in the early stages of a successful career, and these provided support and finance for travel. The *Crouch Prize* in Ballarat and an Asian travelling prize were his first successes, both in 1959, and within a few years he had won the *Perth Prize*, the *Blake Prize*, the *W.D. and H.O. Wills Prize*, and the *Georges Award*. He was invited to enter, but did not win the *Rubinstein Travelling Art Scholarship* in 1960, but won a *Harkness Fellowship* in 1965. When he subsequently received major commissions, his interest in competitions ended. Similarly, John Olsen won about eight prizes in the 1960s. John Santry recounts how, over a beer, he mentioned to Olsen that £100 was the usual prize in country towns, and suggested he try the Tumut competition. Olsen did so, and was awarded the prize by the judge, James Gleeson.[30] His other wins ranged from the Royal Easter Show to the *Georges Award*, the *Wynne Prize* and the *Perth Prize*. He won two more prizes in the 1970s, but at about that time received his major commission for the Sydney Opera House, and apparently lost interest in entering competitions.

Competitions offered a special challenge for Jon Molvig as a way of achieving recognition. The number which he entered was, however, not accurately reflected in the number he won. His successes included the *Lismore Prize* in the 1950s, and in the 1960s some of the more adventurous prizes - the *Rowney Prize for Drawing*, the first *Transfield Prize*, the *Perth Prize*, the *Corio Prize* and the *Gold Coast City Prize*. He had also entered, but without success, the *Blake Prize* in 1954, in which his work was selected to tour, the *Australian Women's Weekly Prize* on three occasions, the *Wynne Prize* twice, the *T. E. Wardle Prize*, the *David Jones Brisbane Prize*, and the *Henry Caselli Richards Prize* nine times. Like the *Archibald*, the *Caselli Prize* was judged by the Trustees of the Gallery, whose taste was demonstrated when the Chairman publicly deplored the purchase of one of Molvig's paintings by the QAG (presumably by the Director, Laurie Thomas) in 1957, describing it as

"rock'n roll art".[31] He responded to five invitations to enter the *Rubinstein Scholarship* without success, and declined a sixth invitation. His engagement with the *Archibald Prize* was a long campaign. His entries appeared in the reject exhibitions from 1955 to 1958. He did not enter in 1956 and 1957, but he remained determined to win, although his financial situation had been improved by his having joined the Komon stable. Between 1960 and 1965 his entries were hung in the main exhibition. In an interview in 1964 he described the judges as stodgy and incompetent, and prophesied that he would probably win the prize on seniority after another eight years.[32] In fact this was an unnecessarily pessimistic prediction, because in 1966 he won, at last receiving recognition and money which enabled him to build a home.

The *Archibald Prize* was a recurring challenge for Joshua Smith, who was the subject of William Dobell's winning entry for the 1943 *Archibald Prize*. He first entered it in 1924 at the age of nineteen and his entry was hung. Subsequently he was represented in forty-five *Archibald* competitions with a total of sixty-five portraits, but his only win was in 1944, the year after Dobell's controversial win and the court case which followed.[33]

Fred Cress also entered several prizes in the 1960s and 1970s, including the *Albury Prize* in 1962 and 1963, the *Perth Prize for Drawing* in 1966, which renewed his interest in drawing,[34] and the *Georges Award* in 1973. In 1988 he won both the *Archibald Prize* itself and the *People's Choice*, a win which reflected a new interest in portraiture which had been partly inspired by Brett Whiteley's win and Fred Williams' being represented in the *Archibald* exhibition. He told a reporter that entering was more important to him than winning, although his winning was important to his mother.[35]

The sculptor Tony Coleing entered few competitions, but those that he entered were significant in his career. In 1968 he won the *Kolotex Prize*, which brought him publicity, and justified his decision to abandon painting in favour of sculpture.[36] His work created considerable excitement at the *Mildura Sculpture Triennials*, and winning the *Flotto Lauro Prize* for sculpture enabled him to visit Europe for a second time. His career then developed with commissions in sculpture, and participation in numerous exhibitions of sculpture and the print.

Unfortunately the information available on competition winners in the 1980s and 1990s is less complete than it is for the first two phases of competitions, because *A and A* reporting of competitions ceased during 1993. It seems, however, that in this third phase there has been a recurring pattern of artists winning a few times or only once, rather than gaining a number of prizes over a longer period. Relatively frequent winners include David Fairbairn, who won about nine prizes in competitions and purchases in regional galleries in NSW and Queensland, and had his entry hung in the 2000 *Archibald* exhibition. Cressida Campbell won a *MPAC Purchase* in 1986, the *Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Award* in 1985, and the *Mosman Prize* in 1989, in addition to some more substantial prizes - the *SMH Art Prize*, the *ACTA Maritime Art Award*, and the *Wynne Prize for Watercolour* and the *Pring Prize*, both in 1992. During this period she had a residency in Europe, and was much occupied with solo and group exhibitions in Australia and overseas. Wendy Sharpe has a relatively large portfolio of awards. In 1986 she won the *Sulman Prize*, and also the *Martin Bequest Travelling Scholarship*, and a residency in Paris. In 1989 she won another scholarship, and in 1991 a post-graduate research award which enabled her to study in Europe, Israel and America. She also won some local prizes, and some of the more important competitions. In 1995 she won not only the *Archibald Prize*, but the *Portia Geach Prize* and the *Kedumba Art Award*. She has subsequently been hung in the *Sulman Prize* and the *Dobell Drawing Prize* exhibitions, and has been commissioned as an official war artist in East Timor.

Judy Watson was involved with a large number of group exhibitions in Sydney, Queensland and Canberra, and with maintaining links with her aboriginal heritage. Most of the prizes she won were for competitions based in Queensland regional towns, but she won the *Moët & Chandon* award for 1995. Marie Hobbs, a Perth based artist, won eight prizes in WA in the 1980s, including the *Mandorla Prize* for religious art, and the *Albany Prize*. Christine Hiller is a Tasmanian painter who has won the *Portia Geach Prize* twice, and had her work hung in the *Archibald* exhibition five times. She finds entering competitions rewarding because it is good to see her work hung with that of others, and she enjoys the prospect of possibly winning, and the excitement of actually winning. While it is costly to send her work to

the mainland for exhibition, it is for her the only way of exhibiting in a wider context.[37]

The third phase of art competitions has presented new approaches, often motivated by an interest in innovation and the excitement of work at the cutting edge, and even a wish for controversy. All these factors would have affected the pattern of artists' participation, and in fact it was relatively common for artists to be invited to enter or to face pre-selection. The *Doug Moran Prize*, for example, with its requirement for a particular style of portraiture, may be increasingly attracting entries from established artists, but all the actual winners have been newcomers. The prestigious *Moët & Chandon Fellowships* aim to provide opportunities for innovative artists and have often been awarded to artists who have not previously won prizes - for example, to Hollie, Elisabeth Kruger and Rosie Weiss. Other new competitions such as the *Seppelt Art Award*, and the *Cecily and Colin Rigg Craft Award* are directed to younger artists who may not have competed before, and who have certainly not won prizes. It was hoped that *Contempora5* would generate controversy.

These younger artists include Susan Norrie, Fiona Hall and Davida Allen. Susan Norrie has not won many prizes, but those she has won have been influential in establishing her reputation. As she described it, her career escalated quickly. She had an exhibition, won the *Herald Art Prize* in 1983, was awarded two arts grants, sold a painting to the AGNSW, and became artist in residence at Melbourne University. For her, however, grants and prizes were not enough - sales were what created confidence in what she was doing, because they demonstrated that people liked the work.[38] She had some reservations about being in the position of competing, and, as she saw it, virtually performing, for prizes. Winning the *Moët & Chandon Fellowship* in 1986, however, gave her courage to push her work further and take more risks.[39] Her experience of the Fellowship in France led her to disagree with the comment of *SMH* critic, John McDonald, that the Fellowship gave too much money, and placed too much pressure on one artist. In her view, artists have to learn to value what they do and to demand recognition, and she saw the Fellowship as being intended to provide a real situation of employment. Some ten years later, Norrie was chosen from the five finalists as the winner of the first *Seppelt Contemporary Art*

Award in Sydney. Her comment was that she regarded the win as recognition that she was still pushing the boundaries.

Fiona Hall has had a wide range of creative interests, including her exploration of the relationships between art and technology at the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide. In the 1980s and 1990s she has shown her work in solo and group exhibitions, including the Sydney Biennale, but her career in the realm of awards was initiated by her participation in the 1995 *AMCOR Paper Awards*, and was promoted dramatically by her win of the first *Contempora5* in Melbourne in 1996.[40]

Other artists for whom winning prizes has formed a basis for a developing reputation include Davida Allen, whose *Gold Coast Purchase* was followed by winning the *Archibald Prize* in 1986, Jenny Sages, who won the *Bathurst Prize* in 1991 and the *Portia Geach Prize* in 1992, and has been hung in the *Archibald*, Rachel Ellis, who won both the *Blake Prize* and the *Kedumba Award* in 1996, Helga Groves who won the *Moët & Chandon* and *Kedumba* awards in 1997 and 1998 respectively, and Euan MacLeod, whose win of the *Archibald* in 1998 was prefaced by a *Gold Coast Purchase* in 1991.

I have attempted to identify patterns of participation in competitions by selected artists in terms of their successes in winning. This approach does not take account of the artists who, for one reason or another, have entered few, if any, competitions, and in so doing have implicitly indicated their attitude to them. Robert Klippel, for example, is reported as having said that he does not judge and will not be judged.[41] I will discuss briefly four significant artists who represent this category. The earliest is James Gleeson. Although he has been active as a judge, he seems to have won only one award, which he shared with Eric Thake in 1944, in a competition which was held by the CAS to attract attention to contemporary art. He clearly had little interest in competing, an attitude which adds to the piquancy of his entering a surrealist self-portrait, *Portrait of the artist as an evolving landscape*, in the 1994 *Archibald Prize* some fifty years later. Although it was the general favourite, it was beaten by an outsider, Francis Giacomo, with a study of the subject in the context of other figures and objects which reflected his interests.

Arthur Boyd entered and won the commercially sponsored *Dunlop Prize* twice in the 1950s, and he also won the *Kuringai Prize* in Sydney, the *H. C. Richards Prize* in Brisbane and a print prize in Warrnambool in the 1960s and early 1970s. This seems to have been the end of competitions for him. He may have entered others unsuccessfully earlier, but after this time his success in England and Australia would have been incompatible with entering competitions.

John Brack is another highly respected painter who has entered few competitions (although some may have been entered on his behalf by his dealer Rudy Komon), and won few prizes. In 1965, at the time when he was head of the NGV Art School, and his work had recently been included in overseas survey exhibitions as well as in local solo exhibitions, he won the *Gallaher Prize for Portraits*. This was a prestigious prize for "a portrait in the manner of our time", and, at £1,500, was then the richest in Australia. It seems to have been awarded only once. Brack's entry was totally consistent with his current work, but his win baffled the critics. His other major win was the *Travelodge Prize*, which was also a prestigious one for invited artists, offering a prize of $7,500. His two entries were part of a series of paintings on which he was working, and which was designed to explore the complexity of life.[42] From 1957 onwards Brack had entered works in other competitions which he did not win, but in the exhibitions for which his work had been hung. These included the *Australian Women's Weekly Prize* for 1957, the *Helena Rubinstein Travelling Scholarships* in 1958 and 1960, and *Print Council Print Prizes*. The brilliantly satirical portrait, *Barry Humphries in the character of Mrs Everage*, which he entered in the *Archibald Prize* for 1969, did not win, but was one of the most memorable of the entries which were hung, and was later acquired for the Gallery. The nature of Brack's entries accords with the view of competitions which he had expressed in relation to the *Georges Invitation Award* in 1965 - that art is not a competition, and that unfortunately many pictures have been painted especially for competitions.[43]

During his 60 years of painting in Australia Ian Fairweather won only two prizes, both in 1965. One was the *John McCaughey Prize* at the AGNSW, for which he would not have had to enter because the prize was given to works which had been exhibited in the AGNSW. The other was the *W.D. and H.O. Wills Prize* of £525. His life was entirely devoted to painting, rather than to the practicalities of earning an income, and

it seems likely that his agent entered this competition on his behalf. A third award which he received, the *International Co-operation Art Award*, was an unsolicited one given by the Australian Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament to a painter who had made an outstanding contribution to painting in Australia.

Many artists are recorded as having won only one competition. It is impossible to establish whether that win was the culmination of a series of attempts, or was a once only event. In either case, it is only the tip of an iceberg, the remainder of which consists of other competitors who did not win that prize. A general check of winners in this category indicates that by far the highest proportion of them have occurred in competitions run by regional galleries and local government authorities, and that there were also a number in competitions sponsored by community groups. This suggests that they were often artists who were entering local competitions in their own area, and some competitions are in fact limited by geographical area - for example, only artists living within specified local postcode areas are eligible to enter the *Albury Art Prize*, and others have at least had a special section for local artists. In some cases, awards are designed to meet particular circumstances. For example, some of the *Mildura Sculpture Triennials* have made special awards to sculptors whose work was experimental and ephemeral, and would not have survived the exhibition. The purchase awards, which seem to be most popular in regional galleries and local government authorities, have attracted a number of artists, many of whom are just beginning their careers. The comparatively large number of purchase awards given by the Gold Coast Gallery are a good example.

Particularly in the third phase of competitions, the specific requirements of commercial sponsors have influenced the pattern of winners. The *Doug Moran Prize*, for example, with its emphasis on a particular style of portraiture, may be increasingly attracting entries from established artists, but all its actual winners have been relative newcomers. The prestigious *Moët & Chandon Fellowship* has been awarded on several occasions to artists who have not previously won prizes - for example, to Hollie, Elisabeth Kruger and Rosie Weiss. Specialised competitions such as the *Seppelt Art Award*, *Contempora5* and the *Cecily and Colin Rigg Craft Award* tend to be directed to young

artists or artists with a particular specialisation who may not have competed before, or in any event have not won prizes.

Some implications of competitions for artists

These brief case histories indicate how some artists have integrated entries in competitions with their artistic career as a whole. The fact that they have entered does not necessarily mean that they are enthusiastic about the idea of competitions - it simply indicates that they see them as offering potential benefits which justify the effort of entry. They do not reflect the many cases in which competing artists were not successful, and in which they may have suffered frustration or discouragement as, of course, they might also do in the art market in general, nor do they reflect the costs in time and money associated with entering competitions.

As David Throsby pointed out to the CAS in 1986, people do not become artists to make money, but they have to make some money to survive.[44] Many of them market their own work rather than using agents,[45] and art competitions offer one means of promotion. They may be an unconventional element of the art market, but they offer opportunities for artists to take initiatives in relation to their current work. One can only speculate as to what benefits individual artists have expected to receive from entering competitions, but it seems likely that the most valued result, especially for emerging artists, has been the chance of getting recognition by winning, or at least being exhibited and noticed by critics and viewers, and so helping to offset the limitations of the small market for contemporary art. They present contemporary work in a context which might not have been available in a formal commercial exhibition. They also offer the possibility of being exhibited and reviewed in different contexts and locations. Moreover, a prize in a competition tends to be seen as a commendation by an expert who is working for a relatively disinterested body, and it therefore has a certain authority, which is a valuable component of a *curriculum vitae*. Elwyn Lynn remarked in 1964 that being noticed in a competition is almost essential as a prerequisite for a one man show, although a competition demands a picture which will attract notice, but probably not sell. Later he warned of the costs involved, and the likelihood of increasingly analytical responses from critics after an artist's success.[46] McCulloch conceded that a spirit of competition could launch careers, although he noted the danger of creating professional

prize-winners who paint to suit judges.[47] The principle expressed in Dobell's remarks after his win in 1949, which were quoted earlier, was not so much that the prospect of a prize might inhibit an artist, but that it would not necessarily stimulate an artist to do his/her best.[48]

One benefit of competitions is associated with the concept of professionalism. Sue Rowley, discussing professionalism in the arts, noted that it is often understood in comparison with what it is not - for example, as non-amateur.[49] Peter Timms pointed out the tendency towards status and official recognition in the crafts.[50] David Throsby has noted that selection of work by peers for public exhibition could be regarded as an indicator of professional standing. The nature of artistic training and practice contributes to the concept.[51] These comments do not relate to art competitions, but they suggest the way in which entering and winning competitions could be seen to be supporting the idea of the professionalism of artists, depending on the standard of the exhibition and the expertise of the judges.

The prospect of winning money is naturally important. The economic study of artists, which was mentioned earlier in relation to their numbers, painted a bleak picture in relation to their incomes. Significant aspects are that many of them work independently in order to survive, often in occupations other than their main artistic occupation, and that they usually have irregular, and often low, incomes.[51]

The case histories illustrate some other benefits of art competitions. For example, they may offer a challenge to create different work, as in the case of Grace Cossington Smith, Fiona Hall, Tony Coleing and Susan Norrie. They may provide publicity for artists who are at the stage of becoming established, as they did for W. B. McInnes, Hans Heysen, Fred Williams, Jon Molvig, Judy Cassab, Jan Senbergs and Wendy Sharpe. Competitions may offer artists a way of reaching new audiences. They may help to create confidence and a sense of professionalism. Some artists simply enjoy competing and winning.

Whatever the potential benefits may be, entering competitions is likely to involve practical difficulties. Significant among these are the extent of and basis for pre-selection, which might have the effect of excluding many competitors altogether. In the first *Contempora5*, for instance,

only installations were chosen as finalists, although this was not indicated in the conditions. The basis for judging, the views of the judges, and the standard of the other competitors are usually not known. Other difficulties include practical considerations such as the time, cost and pressure involved in submitting an entry in a competition, the amount of commissions on sales, and legal questions of artists rights. They also include the value of the prize in relation to that of works which may be acquired through the competition. The potential enhancement of an artist's perceived professionalism through prize-winning has been mentioned. In this situation, the concept of professionalism is, of course, an asset for the sponsor, and it relates to another kind of outcome which may affect the winning artist. A single winner provides the sponsor with a valuable and easily identifiable commodity, and hence winners are liable to be temporarily appropriated by the sponsor as objects of publicity, and possibly to be in danger of becoming type-cast.

Much of this discussion is concerned with artists who have won more than one prize, and who could be regarded as professionals. It does not include the many amateur artists who enter competitions run by local art societies or by fund-raising bodies, for whom the annual competition is extremely important because it is the major group activity for the year, and is the main opportunity for individual artists to have their work reviewed by visiting experts.

A point of view which challenges commercial considerations, and which is perhaps shared, at least in principle, by other artists, was stated by Brian McKay, writing in his private capacity as an artist, although he was at the time Chairman of the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts. He suggested that a work of art is a phenomenon rather than a mere commodity, and that the primary purpose of artists in making art should have nothing to do with financial gain.[53] His counsel of perfection was related to sales, but it could be seen as applying also to competitions.

Artists as a group rarely comment on the fact of competition. The CAS NSW has occasionally been critical of it, but its comments have been more concerned with the judging, and the value of prizes, than with the concept itself. These comments generally relate to commercially sponsored prizes, and not to the competitions run by artists' societies,

which are judged by their peers. The *Broadsheet* for Feb. 1972 proposed a radical plan for a co-operative of artists, presumably publicly funded, which would distribute works of art widely and would end "degrading and frustrating regulations... like social subsidies, funds, prizes, etc". It seems to have been a projection from the now defunct scheme of subsidising artists and receiving their work in exchange which operated in the Netherlands from the late 1940s to the 1980s.[54] The CAS does not appear to have followed it up.

Discussions among women artists held in connection with the *Portia Geach Prize* have been concerned mainly with aspects such as judging, the costs associated with entering, and the nature of portraiture, but the artists have supported the idea of the prize itself.[55]

NAVA, which is the only independent lobby group for artists, art workers and art institutions and organisations, does not seem to have made pronouncements about the philosophical aspects of competition. It is, however, actively concerning itself in practical ways with the economic status of the visual arts, and the status and professional rights of artists. The lists of awards and professional development opportunities which it has published since 1991, indicate that it recognises that competitions provide acceptable opportunities for artists.[56] Its 1984 *Submission to the Inquiry into Assistance to the Arts* noted that it was focussing on the economic status of the visual arts and the status of the individual artist in relation to matters such as taxation and moral rights of the creative artist, two issues which are relevant to art competitions.[57] Similarly, the statement of issues confronting artists which NAVA submitted to all political parties before the 1996 election included reference to these matters and to copyright.[58] Most recently, in August 2000, NAVA, as a partner in the Visual Arts Industry Guidelines Research Project, was associated with publication of a *Draft Code of Practice for the Australian Visual Arts and Crafts Sector*, which is intended to form the basis for development of a practical guide to be adopted by artists, galleries, agents, funding agencies and other key players in the visual arts industry.[59] It deals specifically and in detail with competitions, awards, prizes and fund-raising exhibitions, indicating that they are regarded as a significant element of the arts industry.

Artists who are concerned with marketing their work need to be aware of public attitudes to it. The report *Australians and the Arts*, which was commissioned by the Australia Council and released in June 2000, comments on how Australians perceive the arts to-day, and how they want them to be in the future. One of its findings was that many people are unaware of how they can achieve an appropriate experience of the arts. A comment was that the arts sector can learn some lessons from community engagement with sport.[60] Perhaps competitions in the visual arts could be developed to help meet this need.

ENDNOTES

1 Betty Churcher, *Molvig - the lost Antipodean*, Allen Lane, Ringwood, Vic., 1984.

2 Judy Cassab, *Judy Cassab Diaries*, Alfred A. Knopf, Sydney, 1995.

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CONCLUSION

A century of art competitions in Australia has created an important and diverse source of indirect patronage for the visual arts. The significance of this patronage is shown by the fact that it has evolved during a period when the process of art marketing was becoming more complex, culminating in the concept of an "art industry", and when a variety of forms of government assistance were becoming available to artists. More than 5,000 art competitions were held during the 20th century. Although they have been extremely diverse in nature, they fall into several broad categories. The evolution of these competitions has not previously been examined comprehensively. I have therefore reviewed those which were held, in many cases at an individual level, and I have also considered many of the judges and, as far as possible, the artists who took part. Their collective story is essentially one of a movement which has occurred in locations throughout the country, and which has been driven by the interests and enthusiasms of a variety of participants. In practice, it is the result of interaction between the sponsors who began and supported the competitions, the judges who adjudicated them, and the artists who competed in them.

There have been two distinct kinds of motivations for holding art competitions - they have been sponsored by artists for their own professional purposes, and they have been sponsored by a variety of other individuals and organisations for specific purposes which were of benefit to them. Art competitions were originated by the artists themselves, through their societies, with the practical aim of using their regular exhibitions as a way of developing standards and exchanging ideas, and also of making them more interesting to the public, and hence stimulating sales. The work of artists who competed was judged by their peers, and exhibition openings were social occasions, which were distant echoes of the exhibitions of the Royal Academy in London. Specialist societies of artists such as the CAS and the Print Council of Australia occasionally made use of these exhibitions to promote new ideas and specialisations. Some, although not all, societies of artists have continued to hold competitions at differing levels of professionalism in towns throughout the country, and these competitions have served a vital purpose in providing mutual support and stimulus for artists, and in presenting their work to the local community.

Although artists were the first initiators of art competitions, their evolution has been constantly and ingeniously diversified by sponsors of other kinds, who have made use of them in new ways. One important development was that, by the 1930s, some public art galleries, including the AGNSW and the galleries at Geelong and Bendigo in Victoria, had already begun holding competitions as a way of acquiring contemporary works for their collections, an idea which was subsequently adopted by a number of other provincial galleries. Over time, some of these competitions became increasingly specific in relation to the types of works which were to be acquired. For example, the *Mildura Sculpture Triennial*, the *Fremantle Print Prize*, the *Jacaranda Acquisitive Drawing Award* in Grafton, and the *Sidney Myer International Sculpture Award* at Shepparton, have all enabled galleries to develop special collections. They have also encouraged artists to specialise in these fields, and have introduced viewers to these specialisations. Purchase awards, which were introduced subsequently, were based on limited competition which allowed galleries to meet their specific acquisition needs by making choices from the works which had been selected for their artistic merit. In the 1940s, the AGWA pioneered the idea of using non-acquisitive competitions as a direct way of creating interest in contemporary art.

Another function of competitions in galleries has been what Daniel Thomas has described as "fossilised patronage", in which galleries have received gifts and endowments which involved them in administering prizes which do not suit contemporary artists because they require pictures in an obsolete style.[1] The *Archibald Prize* seems to belong to this category, although it has been drastically remodelled for the purposes of the AGNSW. Again through gifts, the NGV has more recently been able to mount special competitions, at least one of which seems unlikely to become "fossilised" because it is planned to function for a limited period only, and so should be responsive to the current situation.[2]

Local government authorities, particularly in NSW and Queensland, have also been enterprising in holding competitions in order to acquire works, usually for the collections of new or proposed galleries. The State "National" galleries have not been actively involved in selling, but most of the other galleries and local government authorities require

that entries in their competitions should be available for sale, thus providing useful opportunities for the artists, and commissions for the sponsors. Art competitions have clearly been important for all these organisations in terms of acquisitions, publicity and their educational responsibilities.

A quantum leap in the evolution of art competitions occurred when they became objects of patronage by individuals and groups who were not themselves art practitioners, either as artists or as art custodians, but who acquired the idea of public art competitions from the artists' societies, and, less directly, from the major exhibitions of the 19th century. This innovation created two distinct categories of sponsors - the art professionals, and an increasingly diverse group of non-professional patrons.

These new patrons had a variety of motives, enthusiasms and expertise. They were rarely art experts, although they might have had a genuine amateur interest in art, and they did not involve themselves with the technical aspects of their competitions. Claude Hotchin was an exceptional case - an art enthusiast who personally judged the competitions which he ran in Perth in the 1950s and 1960s, and who selected from them items which he bought and presented to institutions in Western Australia. Most of the patrons in this category have, however, employed judges to make decisions on their behalf, working on the rather dubious principle that a "best" work can be identified in any competition. As patrons, they have usually had no intention of being involved in a long term patron/artist relationship, although they would probably have expected to make some short-term capital, mainly in terms of publicity, out of the artist who wins.

Commercially based sponsors have sponsored competitions to ensure that they, as well as the works of art which are entered, go on display, and they have achieved this in a variety of ways. They have used competitions as a means of obtaining designs and concepts for projects associated with their business, such as the *Dunlop Prizes* in the 1950s and the *COMALCO Invitation Award* in the 1960s. These awards were, in fact, a sophisticated form of advertising for a product, and the *Australian Women's Weekly Portrait Prize*, which was offered between 1955 and 1959 and had wide popular appeal, also had a close relationship with its sponsor's business. The *State Theatre Art Quest* of

1929 was an inspired innovation. Although the art had no connection with the nature of the sponsor's business, it was used in a way which attracted tremendous interest from artists and from the general public. Later competitions such as the *Transfield Prize* (1961-1971), the *Georges Award* (1963-1985), and the *Travelodge Art Prize* (1961-1971), similarly had no real association with the sponsor's business, and were simply a sophisticated way of creating publicity and prestige. They were designed to appeal to targetted audiences, to whom they conveyed a message through the size of the prize, and the location, standard and presentation of the competition. Some later sponsors used very large prizes to display their commitment to culture through competitions such as *Contempora5* in Melbourne, which offered $100,000, and the *Moët & Chandon Fellowship*, which offered $50,000 and a residency in France. Others sponsored highly specialised competitions such as the *Seppelts Prize* for works at the cutting edge of artistic ideas. This prize has been staged at the MCA, Sydney, and its outcome is so carefully controlled as to make it a curated show rather than a survey exhibition.

Sponsors with propaganda as their main aim faced a more complex task of using competitions to stimulate painting in a particular genre. The pre-eminent example, the *Blake Prize*, which has fostered religious art since 1951, offered large prizes and, at least in its earlier years, drew audiences with a special interest. For Doug Moran, who, since 1988 has offered $100,000 biennially to attract artists to paint in accordance with a particular convention, the prize not only served this purpose, but seems also to have been designed to project the social image of an affluent and art-loving family. Except for the *Doug Moran Portrait Prize*, in most of these, as in most of the commercially sponsored competitions, all works entered were for sale, so that sponsors could expect to receive some commissions. A sub-group of the commercial sponsors are the many organisations in the community who hold competitions simply as part of the publicity for their fund-raising ventures, and who in fact derive much of their income from commissions.

In all these cases, art competitions have provided a popular, if perhaps expensive, way of associating the sponsor's name with a prestigious cultural occasion. The drama of competition has probably been more successful in attracting publicity, even if it is occasionally

unfavourable, than other philanthropic projects in the field of the visual arts such as presenting works of art to a gallery, or building up a corporate collection. The fact that the competition is concerned with art which is being produced currently adds a feeling of modernity and immediacy to the enterprise. Moreover, sponsors are usually in an independent position because they have no formal long term commitments to the competitions for which they are responsible, and there are certainly none which are externally imposed, even by convention. Competitions therefore offer an attractive device for demonstrating philanthropy in the visual arts, and it seems likely that many sponsors would not have offered support for artists in other ways. In spite of these limitations, there is no doubt that sponsors have been important providers of a kind of patronage because of the chances of success which they offer to artists.

In order to make the competition operation credible, sponsors are, however, dependent on the judges they employ, and there is a clear separation of powers between them and these judges. The judges have performed a vital function. Through their choice of a winner they inevitably make a significant comment on all the entries in a competition. They have to judge each entry on its own merits, rather than as part of an artist's oeuvre, which, in any case is what most members of the viewing public inevitably do. Their greatest challenge is that there are no objective standards which they can apply, and that they are generally expected to choose the "best" from a group of works which may have little in common. Even if they operate on Templeman's principle that they are not so much choosing a winner as simply singling out one work from the others,[3] that work will undoubtedly be considered a winner and will receive an award, and their decisions will in effect help to create standards. They are therefore likely to become influential as taste-makers, but also to attract criticism. It has to be said that, in practice, the judges have usually shown a much greater empathy with contemporary artistic thought than have the sponsors.

The remarkable group of experienced and dedicated judges who have set the scene by officiating at numerous competitions, particularly in Sydney but also throughout NSW and in other states, has been discussed in Chapter 6. It included personalities such as Elwyn Lynn, Hal Missingham, Lloyd Rees and Daniel Thomas, many of whom had curatorial expertise, while a number were practicing artists. A wide

variety of individuals and permutations of individuals has, however, acted as judges throughout the country. Naturally they have personal tastes and idiosyncrasies, but they have made a unique contribution by bringing fresh ideas and assessments to artists and viewers through their judging at competitions, especially in country centres, where the competition may be the focus of the year's work for a group of artists. Comments which they have made when announcing results, whether in the catalogues for the suburban *Rockdale Prize*, or in the more elite context of those for the *Moët & Chandon* award, or simply in informal discussion, could be instructive and stimulating to the artists concerned, and to viewers. Without the focus of competitions, much of this cross-fertilisation would not have occurred. Conversely, experience in judging would inevitably have been a valuable experience for the judges, as well as enhancing their status.

The Trustees of the AGNSW are, of course, judges of a different order who acquire their role automatically, and who may have little artistic expertise. They are concerned, but idiosyncratic in their decisions. Their 1943 decision which awarded the *Archibald Prize* to William Dobell, however, not only made artistic history, but created new concepts of portraiture and of judgement, and their more recent decisions have successfully maintained public interest in these concepts.

Artists are the principal beneficiaries of art competitions, although they are by no means the only beneficiaries. In what seems to be a cyclical process, artists have continued to enter competitions in numbers and at standards which have been sufficient to encourage sponsors to continue to hold them.

The most important practical benefit of competitions is the variety of potential opportunities they offer, which are particularly attractive to the many artists who market their own work.[4] It is clearly desirable to win a competition, not only because of the personal satisfaction of winning, but because of the actual award and the kudos associated with it. Other possible benefits include being represented in a survey exhibition which might generate critical comment and sales, and the possibility of having work included in the collection of a public gallery. Moreover, an exhibition provides a showcase for an artist's current work, which is often not easy to market. It might help to assign values

to the works, and, if it is held outside the artist's home location, could extend the artist's reputation to the new area. Professional, as distinct from strictly practical, advantages of participating include the fact that it could be a stimulus to create different or experimental work, and also the fact that participation itself could help to establish professionalism.

These benefits are, however, likely to be offset by factors such as the problem of assessing the wide range of future competitions in order to identify those which might be appropriate, the costs involved, and the temptation to create an eye-catching, but uncharacteristic, painting. Other potential practical problems have been identified in the *Draft Code of Practice for the Australian Visual Arts and Crafts Sector* which was produced in 2000.[5]

A survey carried out in 1994 found that more than 40% of artists believe that their talent is the most important single influence on their success as an artist.[6] Art competitions can play a part in supporting this confidence, but they can also help to destroy it. All art competitions are based on the concept that it is possible for individual artists to compete in terms of their individual creativity. Aspects of this concept have been challenged by artists, curators and critics, and it is instructive to review the comments of some early commentators. In 1949, William Dobell spoke of the danger of the competitive spirit creating a false emphasis on effort, and destroying the co-operative spirit of artists.[7] In 1961, at the time of the genesis of the *Mildura Sculpture Triennial*, Ernst van Hattum, then Director of the Mildura Arts Centre, said that art competitions were based, wrongly, on the assumption that art is something measurable.[8] Artist John Brack, although he acknowledged art competitions as a valuable contribution to the art economy, considered that they might be doing more harm than good because they inspired artists to paint pictures designed to attract attention.[9] Elwyn Lynn saw possible hazards in judging and pre-selection, but concluded that prize competitions could be useful and aesthetically valid if it was accepted that a work of art is complete in itself.[10] It can, in any case, be argued that competition and its effects are endemic in other areas of the art market. In practice, judges have to develop their own rationalisations for making decisions in spite of these complications, and the convention that they will do so is accepted by all who are involved.

The difficulty faced by artists in establishing a professional identity which in many cases cannot be based on formal qualifications, income or membership of professional bodies, and which is largely a matter of self-definition, was discussed more recently by the art historian Sue Rowley.[11] Art competitions do not overcome these difficulties, but their results have a certain authority because of the formality and publicity of competitions and the fact that they are judged by experts. This authority helps to create the notion of professionalism. It may also involve some penalties, one of which is that winning artists and their work tend to be regarded by the sponsors of the competition as commodities which are at least temporarily at their disposal.

Both philosophically and geographically, art competitions seem to have created a form of art patronage which is peculiarly appropriate in Australia. The visual arts are a form of art which in practice it is relatively simple to present to the public, and there is some popular respect for them, although not necessarily active interest. Philosophically, the concept of competition, including competition in art, is generally accepted by a community which is preoccupied with competition in sport and business, and which frequents agricultural shows. This ready acceptance of competition is perhaps supported by the theory advanced by the Dutch philosopher Huizinga that there is a primordial play element in competitions for excellence and that this element may make them more interesting to the public.[12] This theory was echoed by Elwyn Lynn's comment that, for some viewers to have art presented as a bit of a gamble, robs it of too much disconcerting seriousness.[13]

The geography of Australia is another factor which has contributed to making art competitions an especially relevant form of support for the visual arts in Australia. It is important in two ways. Firstly, competitions can be organised and managed by communities in many different locations to provide a focus for their particular needs in terms of professional standards and interests, possibly in situations where there would otherwise be no available source of expertise. Secondly, competitions may bring expert judges from other places, and may attract enteries of works by artists from elsewhere, thus providing new ideas and opportunities for both the visitors and the visited.

The concept of competition, translated into the organisation of individual art competitions, creates a short-term focus of expertise and interest in locations throughout the country, and it also creates a visible temporary

hierarchy among artists. It can function at differing levels of professionalism in different situations. It can provide a powerful focus for public interest and for social occasions. Art competitions offer greater opportunities for participation and publicity than grants to artists, which are often more concerned with an artist's potential, rather than current work. Clearly, they do not take the place of purchases, but, in the absence of disinterested patronage, it seems likely that competitions will continue to function, and to adapt to new situations, continuing the process of change and development which has characterised them in the past.

Through NAVA, which represents many of them professionally, artists have been active in the codification of standards for the practical operation of art competitions, and the Artists Foundation of Western Australia has published a handbook which provides guidance on planning competitions.[14] Artists have, however, not been involved in the planning of, or advising on, competitions except for those run by their own societies. The main source of advice for sponsors and potential sponsors has been the art institutions, and, in particular, the public art galleries. Perhaps in the future it might be possible for artists, through NAVA, to contribute to the development of new concepts and directions for this form of patronage by proxy which would make it increasingly valuable to them professionally.

ENDNOTES

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2 The *Clemenger Triennial Award* is to be presented at the NGV for a period of twenty years from its commencement in 1991.

3 Ian Templeman Interview, 1998. Templeman, as Director of the Fremantle Arts Centre, was responsible for establishing the *Fremantle Print Award*, and for planning and participating in the judging.

4 David Throsby & Beverley Thompson, *But what do you do for a living? A new economic study of Australian artists*. Australia Council, Redfern, 1944, p. 19. This survey found that some 44% of visual artists work independently, without using an agent.

5 Jordan, Caroline, *Draft Code of Practice for the Australian Visual Arts and Craft Sector*, Visual Arts Industry Guidelines Research Project, Sydney, 2000.

6 David Throsby and Beverley Thompson, op. cit. pp. 36, 37. Like Giovanni Pisano in the 13th century, who was mentioned in the Introduction, they believe in their own professional creativity.

7 William Dobell, 'Archibald Prize harmful', *SMH*, 23 Jan. 1949, p. 3.

8 Ernst van Hattum, 'Preface', *Catalogue of the Mildara Sculpture Triennial 1961*, p. 7.

9 John Brack, 'Georges Invitation Art Prize', *A and A*, vol. 3, no. 1, June 1965, p. 56.

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